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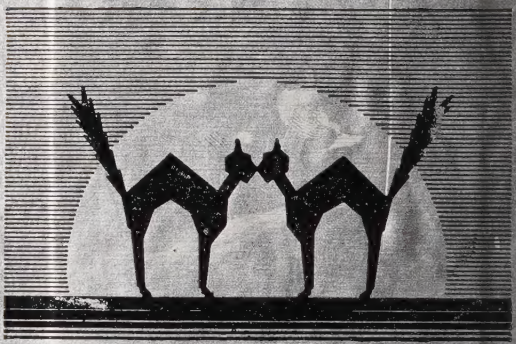

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[JULIAN THE APOSTATE]

THE DEATH OF THE GODS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL RUSSIAN OF

DMITRI MEREJKOWSKI

BY

BERNARD GUILBERT GUERNEY

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THE ROMANCE OF LEONARDO DA VINCI, BY DMITRI MEREJKOWSKI, TRANSLATED BY BERNARD GUILBERT GUERNEY, IS NUMBER 138 IN THE MODERN LIBRARY

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To

ARTHUR GARFIELD HAYS

IN ADMIRATION
I DEDICATE THE LABOUR OF
THIS TRANSLATION.

B. G. G.

CRITICAL FOREWORD

By the Translator

Those persons who have not yet seen a copy of my translation of the *Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* * are referred there for a biographical treatment of Merejkowsky; in the present foreword I must confine myself to a brief critical note.

The Death of the Gods [*Julian the Apostate*] is the first part of the trilogy of *Christ and Anti-Christ; The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* [*The Gods Resurgent*] being the second, and *Anti-Christ* [*Peter and Alexis*] the third. *Christ and Anti-Christ* is a stupendously splendid triptych, the work of a cunning worker; we may consider and admire each panel by itself,—its grouping, composition, costuming and characterisations, its incident and background. But it is when we step back and obtain a true perspective that we perceive the author's full design and his fuller purport,—the differing, yet similar, characters, backgrounds, incidents,—details in each panel that carry out the theme of the whole triptych: the eternal struggle between the two natures of man; the eternal struggle between Man the God—and Man the Louse.

Julian the Apostate is, to me, one of the most poignant figures in all literature,—more poignant than Oblomov, —or even Don Quixote. What greater spiritual disaster can there be than this?—to have in forced hypocrisy upon one's lips a name execrated within one's heart; to

* No. 138 in the Modern Library.

tear off the hated mask at last, to replace the hated Cross of Jesus with the beloved Sun-Symbol of Helios, in temporary triumph; to find the dark religion of helots, prostitutes, weaklings, even though trampled and spurned, an imperishable hydra; and the religion of freedom, sunlight and beauty beyond resuscitation; to stake one's all,—reason, and life itself,—upon a single cast,—only to find the black Triune Shadow crawling up from the low places, like the choking pall of a miasmatic fog, and one's own beloved, yearned-for Pantheon on high consisting of not even shadows,—since shadows must needs have substance for their casting. . . .

Like a *leit-motif* throughout the book we have the black shadows of the monks creeping over the white marble of Hellas,—the black robes of the monks blotting out the laughing beauty of Hellas, alive in her sculptured, sun-flooded marble; the glory that was Greece stifled by the pestilential breath of the rabble-religion, and the grandeur that was Rome undermined by the rat-holes, the catacombs, of the new religion.

For it is beauty that is the true religion to Merejkowsky; it is the true beauty of Christ's soul, it is the spiritual beauty of *theoretical* Christianity which makes him a real Christian,—even as the lines of Homer or the beauty of the Apollo Belvedere make him a true pagan. . . . It is his sensitiveness to beauty which makes him shudder at the ugliness, the sordidity of humanity in the raw. . . . God is Beauty; Beauty is God. . . . Man the God is beautiful,—but oh, he rises so seldom out of the morass of Men the Lice,—and the quagmire forever strives to suck him back into its depths. . . .

It is this sensitiveness to beauty—and to ugliness, the reverse side of the medal,—which makes *Julian* the re-

sult of first-hand impressions on the author's part, and not—in spite of its wealth of antiquarian detail—of mere bookishness. And, even as in *Leonardo* Merejkowsky did an unbelievably fine thing in his description of the Witches' Sabbath, so in *Julian* he does for Christianity, in a single chapter, what Flaubert did for all religions in a full novel-play—*The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. [I refer to Julian's wily convocation of all the different Christian sects in an œcumenical council.] There be other good things a-plenty,—such as the *cordax* dance; mysteries and initiations; *genre* pictures; two battle pieces. . . . And, in my by no means humble opinion, the rape by Julian of his own wife is as powerful a scene, as unique, and as fine, as that of the delirifacient *Grand Inquisitor* chapter in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Neither are his locales described at second-hand; Merejkowsky has travelled extensively and sought beauty everywhere. He has beheld the white marble of Hellas,—and he can read her inscriptions. He has visited the old neglected shrines and deserted temples, and overthrown gods. . . . And so, in *Julian*, Kybele, silvern Kybele, is melted down by the mob; in *Leonardo* she is dug up, as The White She-Demon; in *Peter and Alexis* she is regnant again, in St. Peter's City. . . .

Critical cant requires, of course, a pigeon-holing of authors, a grading and weighing. Comparisons are always invidious—and, worse still, inconclusive. It has always seemed to me fallacious to scold a rose for not being an iris. I therefore refuse—at least at this time—to tabulate and weigh Merejkowsky. But I can state, almost as emphatically as if I had the reader in my shop and were urging him—or her—to buy: If you seek beauty, you will find it in Merejkowsky.

This translation was done under circumstances not quite as romantic as those prevailing when *Leonardo* was done; nevertheless, *Julian* presented many difficulties, not the least of which was the Russian orthography of proper names, words from the Greek, and so forth. I have most carefully checked up everything that I possibly could, but, beyond a doubt, some errors must have crept in; I would therefore be grateful for any suggestions and corrections, which may be sent to the subjoined address.

I doff my sacramental critical garments—and bid the reader to feast on the pages within.

BERNARD GUILBERT GUERNEY.

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PART FIRST

I

Some twenty stadia away from Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, on the forest-clad spurs of Mount Argæus, near the great Roman road, was situated a spring of warm medicinal waters. A stone slab with carvings of men and a Greek inscription, both crudely hacked, attested that on a time this well-spring had been dedicated to the brothers Dioscuri,—to Castor and Pollux. The representations of the pagan gods, having remained inviolate, were now deemed representations of Christian saints,—Cosmus and Damian.

On the other side of the road, opposite this Holy Well, was built a small tavern,—a hovel thatched with straw, with a filthy cattle-yard and a shed for the hens and geese. In this little inn one could get cheese made of goat milk, half-white bread, honey, olive oil, and a rather tart local wine. This tavern was kept by a wily Armenian, one Syrax.

A partition divided it into two parts: one for the common folk, the other for the more respectable guests. Underneath the ceiling, blackened by the acrid smoke, were hung up smoked hams and bunches of fragrant mountain herbs,—Fortunata, the wife of Syrax, was a good housewife.

The house was deemed a suspicious one. Good folk would not put up in it of nights; there were rumours current of shady deeds perpetrated in this hovel. But Syrax was shifty, knew the art of giving a bribe, and always came through unscathed.

The partition consisted of two slender little pillars, upon which was stretched, in lieu of a curtain, an old faded chlamys of Fortunata's. These little pillars constituted the sole glory of the little inn, and were the pride of Syrax,—at one time gilded, they had long since cracked and faded; the stuff of the chlamys, formerly a bright lilac, now a dusty blue, was motley with many patches and traces of breakfasts, suppers, and dinners, recalling to the worthy Fortunata ten years of domesticity. In the better half of the tavern, divided off by the curtain, upon the only couch, narrow and with holes, at a table laden with a pewter krater and goblets of wine, a Roman military tribune of the sixteenth legion of the ninth cohort, one Marcus Scúdilo, was reclining in state. Marcus was a provincial dandy, one of those personages at sight of whom the lively female slaves and cheap hetæræ of city suburbs are wont to exclaim in simple-hearted rapture: "What a handsome man!" At his feet, upon the same *lectica,* his body in a respectful and uncomfortable position, sat a ruddy-faced, corpulent fellow, who suffered from asthma, with a bare skull and sparse grey hairs, combed forward from the nape of his neck towards his temples,—a centurion of the eighth century, one Publius Aquila. At a distance, on the floor, twelve Roman legionaries were casting dice.

"I swear by Hercules," exclaimed Scúdilo, "I would rather consent to be last in Constantinople than the first man in this hole. For is this life, Publius? Well, now, frankly speaking, tell me,—is this life? To know that save drills, and barracks, and camps, there is naught ahead. . . . One can rot in this stinking quagmire and never see the world!"

"Ay, life here, one may say, is not gay," concurred

Publius. "But then, on the other hand, 'tis a peaceful one."

The old centurion was taken up with the dice; pretending to listen to the chatter of his commander, and echoing him, he was on the sly following the game of the soldiers and reflecting: "If that red-head makes a skillful throw, he may win, likely as not." It was only for the sake of politeness that Publius asked the tribune, as if he, Publius, found the matter interesting:

"What cause dost thou give, then, for the displeasure of the Prefect Helvidius against thee?"

"Because of a woman, my friend,—all because of a woman."

And, in a fit of talkative confidence, with a mysterious air, Marcus imparted in the centurion's ear that the prefect, "this old he-goat, Helvidius," had grown jealous of him, because of the newly arrived hetæra, Lilibianca; Scúdilo desired, through some prompt, important service to restore himself to the favour of Helvidius.—Not far from Cæsarea, in the stronghold of Macellum, were confined Julian and Gallus, cousins of the reigning emperor Constantius, nephews of Constantine the Great, and the last scions of the ill-fated house of the Flavii. Upon ascending the throne, for fear of rivals, Constantius had put to death his own uncle, father of Julian and Gallus,—Julius Constantius, brother of Constantine. Many other victims had fallen. But Julian and Gallus had been spared, being sent to the isolated castle of Macellum. Helvidius, the Prefect of Cæsarea, was in a great quandary. Knowing that the new emperor hated the two youths, who recalled to him his crime, Helvidius both desired and feared to divine the will of Constantius. Julian and Gallus lived in perpetual dread of death. The

adroit tribune, Scúdilo, dreaming of the possibility of service at court, had understood from the hints of his superior that the latter could not resolve upon assuming the responsibility, and was frightened by rumours of the contemplated flight of the heirs of Constantine; thereupon Marcus resolved to set out with a division of legionaries into Macellum, and at his own risk to seize the captives, bringing them away into Cæsarea, supposing that there was no need of fearing two orphans, not of age, abandoned of all, and hateful to the emperor. By this exploit he hoped to regain the favour of the Prefect Helvidius, lost through the rufous-haired Lilibianca.

However, Marcus imparted but a part of his schemes to Publius, and cautiously, to boot.

"What, then, dost thou want to do, Scúdilo? Or have the instructions been received from Constantinople?"

"There are no instructions of any sort; no one knows anything of a certainty. But there are rumours, dost thou see,—there be thousands of rumours and expectations, and hints, and utterances left unfinished, and threats, and mysteries,—oh, there is never an end to the mysteries! Any fool could carry out that which is told him. But do thou surmise the unuttered will of the potentate,—that is what merits their gratitude. The main thing is to do it bravely, most bravely,—having made the sign of the cross. I depend upon thee, Publius. Mayhap thou and I will soon be drinking, at court, a wine sweeter than this. . . ."

The dismal light of an inclement evening was falling through the little grated window; the rain beat monotonously. Alongside, behind a thin clay wall with many cracks, was a sty whence came an odour of manure, the clucking of hens, the peep-peep of chicks, the grunting of

swine; milk could be heard squirting into a resounding vessel,—probably the mistress of the house was milking the cow. The soldiers, having quarrelled over their winnings, were cursing in whispers. Near the very floor, among the willow withes barely covered with clay, the tender and pink snout of a suckling pig peered out through a crack; he had fallen into a snare, being unable to withdraw his head, and was piteously squealing.

Publius reflected:

"In the meanwhile we are nearer the cattle-court than the Emperor's court."

His agitation had passed. The tribune, after his immoderate talkativeness, had also become bored. He threw a glance at the grey rainy sky, showing through the little window, at the silly snout of the suckling pig, at the sour heel-tap of the abominable wine in the pewter goblet, at the dirty soldiers,—and an anger possessed him. He began thumping his fist on the table, which rocked on its uneven legs.

"Holla, there, thou cheat, thou Christ-seller,—Syrax! Come thou hither! What sort of wine is this, knave?"

The inn-keeper came running. He had hair as black as pitch, all in the smallest of fine curls, and his beard was just as black, with a bluish tinge, also done into countless fine ringlets; in moments of connubial tenderness Fortunata was wont to say that the beard of Syrax was like to clusters of sweet grapes; his eyes were black and unusually sweet; the sweetest of smiles never left his rosy lips; he resembled a caricature of Dionysos, the god of wine,—he seemed all blackness and sweetness.

The inn-keeper swore by Moses, and Dindymene,[1] and Christ, and Hercules, that the wine was most excellent; but the tribune declared that he knew in whose house

the Pamphylian merchant Glabrion had his weazand slit, and that he would, some time or other, drive him, Syrax, out into the open. The frightened Armenian dashed headlong into the cellar, and soon, with triumph, brought out a bottle of an unusual appearance,—broad and flat below, with a slender neck, all covered over with noble mildew and moss, as though it were hoary with age. Through the mildew, here and there, could be seen the glass,—not transparent, however, but opaque, slightly iridescent; on a little shingle of cedar wood, hung about the neck, one could make out the first letters: *Anthosmium,* and, further on, *annorum centum*—numbering an hundred years. But Syrax maintained that even in the times of the Emperor Diocletian the wine had been more than a hundred years old.

"Black wine?" asked Publius in reverent awe.

"Black as pitch, and fragrant as ambrosia. Ho, Fortunata,—this wine calls for summer cups of crystal! And fetch us some pure, white snow from the ice-house."

Fortunata brought two goblets. She had a robust face, with a pleasant yellowish whiteness, like that of rich clotted cream; there seemed to be about her a scent of rustic freshness, of milk and of manure.

The inn-keeper glanced at the bottle with a sigh of rapture, and kissed its neck; then he carefully took off its waxen seal and uncorked it. Snow was placed on the bottom of the crystal goblet. The wine flowed out in a thick, black, fragrant stream; the snow melted from the contact of the fiery Anthosmium; the crystal sides of the vessel grew misty and sweated from the chill. Thereupon Scúdilo, who had paid for his education in coppers (he was capable of confusing Hecuba with Hecate),

declaimed with pride the sole verse of Martial he remembered:

"Candida nigrescant vetulo crystalla Falerno."

"Wait! 'Twill taste still better!"

Syrax lowered his hand into a deep pocket, got out the tiniest of bottles, made out of solid onyx, and with a sensuous smile added to the wine a drop of precious Arabian cinnamon; the drop fell into the black Anthosmium, like a turbidly white pearl, and dissolved; a strange, sweet odour was wafted through the room.

While the tribune was slowly drinking in rapture, Syrax was clicking his tongue and well-nigh chanting:

"The wine of Byblos, of Maronea, of Lacinium, of Icaria,—it is all but trash before this!"

It was darkling. Scúdilo gave the command to fall in for the march. The legionaries donned their breastplates, their helmets, and the iron greaves on their right legs; they picked up their shields and spears. When they came out from behind the partition, the shepherds of Isauria, who had the appearance of brigands, and who were sitting by the hearth, arose respectfully before the Roman tribune. He had a majestic air; his head was buzzing; in his veins was the fire of the noble drink.

On the threshold he was approached by a man in strange Eastern garb,—a white mantle with red transversal stripes, and with a high head-gear of woolen felt, a Persian tiara resembling a tower. Scúdilo halted. The Persian's face was thin, long, olive-yellow in colour; his narrow, penetrating eyes were filled with profound and crafty thought; a grave calm was in all his motions. This was one of those wandering astrologues, who with pride styled themselves Chaldæans, magi, Parætacæ, and

mathematicians. He immediately informed the tribune that his name was Nogodares; he had stopped at Syrax's in his travels; his journey lay from distant Adiabene to the shores of the Ionic Sea, to the famous philosopher and theurgist, Maximus of Ephesus. The magus requested permission to exhibit his art and to prognosticate the tribune's fortune.

The shutters were closed. The Persian was preparing something on the floor; suddenly a slight crackling was heard,—everybody grew quiet. A reddish flame arose in a slender, long tongue out of the white smoke which filled the room. Nogodares applied a double reed-pipe to his bloodless lips,—and its sound was languorous, plaintive, recalling Lydian funerary dirges. The flame, as though from this plaintive sound, became yellower, dimmer; it began to glow with a pale-blue, gently melancholy effulgence. The magus cast into the fire some dried grass,—a strong, pleasant odour spread through the room; this odour, too, seemed melancholy: half-withered grasses spread such a fragrance on misty evenings, over the dead deserts of Arachosia or Drangiana. And, obedient to the plaintive sound of the little reed-pipe, an enormous serpent slowly glided out of a black box at the feet of the wizard, rustlingly unwinding its resilient coils, glistening with a greenish sheen. Thereupon he began to chant in a drawn-out, low voice,—so that the song seemed to reach them from afar; and many times did he repeat one word, ever the same: always the one and same word: *"Mara, mara, mara."* The serpent entwined itself about his spare waist, and, caressingly, with a tender hissing, drew its flat, green-scaled head, with eyes that glistened like to carbuncles, to the very ear of the wizard; its long, forked sting flashed out with a whistle,

as though it had uttered something in his ear. The wizard threw his little reed-pipe on the floor. The flame again filled the room with turbidly white smoke, but this time its odour was heavy, stupefying, as though it were of the grave,—and suddenly expired. Darkness and fear reigned. All were in confusion. But, when the shutters were opened, and the leaden light of the rainy twilight fell into the room, there was never a trace left of the serpent and its black box. All faces seemed deathly white.

Nogodares walked up to the tribune:

"Rejoice! Great and immediate favour of the blessed Augustus, the Emperor Constantius, awaits thee."

For several moments he gazed intently at Scúdilo's hand, at the lineaments of his palm; then, quickly bending towards his ear, so that none might hear, he uttered in a whisper:

"Blood,—the blood of a great Cæsar, is upon this hand!"

Scúdilo grew frightened.

"How darest thou, accursed Chaldæan dog? I am a faithful servant. . . ."

But the latter looked into his face well-nigh mockingly, and whispered:

"What dost thou fear? . . . After many years . . . And,—is there ever glory without blood? . . ."

When the soldiers quitted the tavern, pride and rejoicing filled the heart of Scúdilo. He drew near to the Holy Well, piously crossed himself, drank some of the medicinal water, calling upon Cosmus and Damian in earnest prayer, and secretly hoping that the prediction of Nogodares would not prove vain; after that he vaulted upon his splendid Cappadocian stallion, and gave the sign for the soldiers to set out on the march. The

draconarius, or standard bearer, raised up the standard, in the form of a dragon of purple stuff. The tribune was fain to flaunt himself before the crowd which had poured out of the inn. He knew that this was fraught with danger, but intoxicated with wine and pride, could not restrain himself; stretching forth his sword in the direction of the fog-covered ravine, he uttered loudly:

"On to Macellum!"

A murmur of amazement was heard; the names of Julian and Gallus were uttered. The trumpeter, who was standing at the head of the men, began to blow his brazen *buccina,* bent at the top into several spirals, like to the horns of a ram. The prolonged sound of the Roman trumpet flew far over the ravines, and the mountain echo caught it up.

II

It was dark in the enormous sleeping-chamber at Macellum, which had on a time been the castle of the sovereigns of Cappadocia.

The couch of the ten-year-old Julian was hard, bare wood covered with a panther-skin; the boy himself wanted it thus; not in vain was his old teacher, Mardonius, bringing him up in the severe first principles of Stoic wisdom.

Julian could not sleep. The wind would arise at rare intervals, in gusts, and piteously, like a caught beast, would fall to howling through the cracks; then there would again fall a sudden quiet, and in this strange stillness one could hear the falling of infrequent, large raindrops, probably from a great height, on to the resounding stone flags. At times it seemed to Julian that he heard the rapid rustling of a bat in the black murk of the vaulted arches. He distinguished the sleepy breathing of his brother, who slept—since he was a capricious boy and used to luxuries—upon a soft couch under a dusty, ancient baldaquin, the last remnant of the magnificence of the sovereigns of Cappadocia. From an adjacent chamber came the heavy snoring of Mardonius, the pedagogue.

Suddenly the little wrought-iron door of a secret staircase in the wall emitted a low creak, opened, and a ray of light blinded Julian's eyes. The old female slave Labda entered; she was holding a copper lamp.

"Nurse, I am afraid; do not take away the light."

The crone placed the lamp in the half-round stone recess at the head of Julian's bed.

"Canst thou not sleep? Doth thy little head ache, perchance? Wouldst eat? That old sinner Mardonius keeps you two half-starved. I have brought some honey wafers, —tasty, they are. Try them."

Feeding Julian was the favourite occupation of Labda; but Mardonius would not permit it in the day-time, and she would bring tid-bits on the sly in the night-time.

The purblind crone, who could hardly drag her legs, always went about in a black monastic garb; she was deemed a witch, but was a pious Christian; the gloomiest of the ancient and the new superstitions had blended in her head into a strange religion, akin to madness: she mixed prayers with incantations, Olympian gods with Christian fiends, churchly rites with witchcraft; she was all behung with little crucifixes, sacrilegious amulets of dead-men's bones, and scapularies with the holy dust of saints. The old woman loved Julian with a devout love, deeming him the sole lawful successor of the Emperor Constantine, whereas Constantius she deemed an assassin and an usurper of the throne.

Labda knew, as no one else, the whole family tree, the sempiternal family traditions of the House of the Flavii: she remembered Julian's grandsire, Constantius Chlorus; sanguine secrets of the court were preserved in her memory. Of nights the old woman would tell Julian everything, without any discrimination. And before much that his child's intellect could not as yet comprehend, his heart already contracted in a vague terror. With her gaze glazed, in that apathetic and monotonous

voice in which ancient fables are told, she would narrate these fearful, endless tales.

Having put down her lamp, Labda made the sign of the cross over Julian, looked to see if the amber amulet upon his breast were still unharmed, and, having uttered a number of incantations to drive off evil spirits, she disappeared.

Julian lost consciousness in a heavy half-doze; he felt hot; the infrequent, heavy drops of rain, falling in the darkness from some height, as though into a resounding vessel, tormented him.

And he could not distinguish whether he slept or no, whether it was the noise of the night wind that he heard, or the ancient Labda, babbling and whispering in his ear frightful family traditions, like a Parca. That which he had heard from her, and that which he himself had witnessed in his childhood, blended into a single oppressive delirium.

He beheld the corpse of the great Emperor on a funerary couch. The dead man is bedaubed with rouge and whitening; the most skillful wigmakers had made his cunning, many-tiered head-dress of artificial hair. Little Julian is brought that he may for the last time kiss the hand of his uncle. The child is afraid; he is blinded by the purple, the diadem on the false curls, and the magnificence of the precious stones, flashing in the light of the funerary candles. Through the heavy Arabian odours he, for the first time in his life, perceives the odour of putrefaction. But the courtiers, the bishops, the eunuchs, the military commanders, all greet the Emperor as though he were alive; ambassadors bow down before him, rendering their thanks to him, observing the pomp of ceremonial; officials proclaim the edicts, the laws, the de-

cisions of the Senate; they ask the assent of the dead man, as though he were capable of hearing; and whispered flattery floats above the throng,—men assert that he is evidently so great that, at the special dispensation of providence, he is the only one to reign even after his death.

Julian knows that Constantine had murdered his own son,—the sole fault of the young hero being in that he was too well-beloved of the people; the son had been calumniated by his step-mother,—she had fallen in love with her youthful stepson with a love that was sinful, and had avenged herself upon him, even as Phædra had upon Hippolytus; after that it had been proved that Cæsar's wife was in a criminal liaison with one of the slaves attached to the Imperial stable, and she had been strangled in a bath brought to red heat.—Then had come the turn of the noble Licinius himself.—Corpse followed corpse, victim followed victim.—The Emperor, tortured by conscience, prayed the hierophants of heathen mysteries for purification,—he was refused. Thereupon a bishop assured him that in the Christian faith alone were there mysteries capable of shriving him of even such crimes. And lo, the magnificent *Labarum*,—a standard with the name of Christ wrought in precious stones,—glitters over the bier of the filicide.

Julian wanted to awake, to open his eyes, and could not. The resounding drops fell as formerly, like heavy, infrequent tears, and the wind raged noisily; but it seemed to him that it was not the wind that was noisy, but Labda, the old Parca,[2] whispering, babbling into his ears the fearful fables of the House of the Flavii.

Julian dreams that he is amid cold dankness, alongside of the porphyry sepulchres, filled with the dust of sov-

ereigns, in a subterranean place,—the family vault of Constantius Chlorus; Labda is concealing him, hiding him in the darkest corner, among the sepulchres, and that she is wrapping up the ailing Gallus, who is shivering in fever. Suddenly, above, in the palace, from chamber to chamber, under the stone vaults of the reverberating, empty palatial halls, there resounds the shriek of one about to die. Julian recognizes his father's voice, wants to make an answering cry, to run headlong to him. But Labda holds back the boy with her bony hands and whispers: "Be still, be still, or else they will come!"—and puts the covering over his head. Then comes the sound of hasty steps on the staircase,—nearer, ever nearer. Labda makes the sign of the cross over the children, and whispers incantations. There is a knocking on the door, and, in the light of the torches, the warriors of the Cæsar break into the room,—disguised as monks; they are led by the Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia; their breast-plates glisten under their black cassocks. "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Answer,—who is here?" Labda with the children has hidden herself in a corner. And again: "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—who is here?" And a third time came the injunction. Then, with bared swords, the assassins scour the place. Labda throws herself at their feet; she indicates the ailing Gallus, the helpless Julian: "Fear God! What can a five-year-old boy do to the Emperor?" And the warriors compel all three to kiss the cross in the hands of Eusebius, to take the oath of allegiance to the new Emperor. Julian remembers the large cross of cypress-wood, with enamel representing the Saviour: below, on the darkened old wood, are visible traces of fresh blood—from the ensanguined hand of the

assassin,—perhaps this is the blood of Julian's father, or of one of his father's six cousins,—Dalmatius, Hannibalian, Nepotian, Constantine the Younger, or one of the others: the fratricide had stepped over seven corpses to mount the throne, and everything had been consummated in the name of the Crucified.

Julian awoke from the stillness and from terror. The resounding, rare drops had ceased falling. The wind had died down. The lamp, without flickering, burned in the recess with an immovable, slender and long tongue of flame. He jumped up in his bed, listening to the beats of his own heart. The stillness was unendurable.

Suddenly, from below, were heard loud voices and steps, going from chamber to chamber, under the stone vaults of the reverberating empty halls,—here, in Macellum, even as there, in the mausoleum of the Flavii. Julian shuddered; it seemed to him that he was still in a delirium. But the steps were nearing, the voices were becoming clearer. Thereupon he cried out:

"Brother! Brother! Art thou sleeping? Mardonius? Can ye not hear?"

Gallus awoke; Mardonius, bare-footed, with rumpled grey hair, in a short night tunic,—he was an eunuch, with a wrinkled, yellowish and bloated face, and resembled an old country wife,—darted toward the secret door.

"The soldiers of the Prefect! Dress as quickly as ye can! We must flee!"

But it was too late. The clanking of iron was heard. The small wrought-iron door was being locked from the outside. On the stone pillars of the staircase gleamed the light of torches, and, in that light, they glimpsed the purple standard of the draconary and a glistening cross

with the monogram of Christ on the helmet of one of the warriors.

"In the name of the orthodox, blessed Augustus, the Emperor Constantius, I, Marcus Scúdilo, Tribune of the Legion of Fretensis, do take under guard Julian and Gallus, the sons of the Patrician Julius."

Mardonius, blocking the way of the soldiers, stood before the door of the sleeping-chamber, with a martial bearing, sword in hand; the sword was dull, fit for nothing,—it served the old pedagogue solely for demonstrating, during his lessons in *The Iliad,* in a graphic manner, with corresponding bodily gestures, how Hector fought with Achilles; the scholarly Achilles could hardly have slain a pullet. Now he was brandishing this sword before the nose of Publius according to all the rules of the military art of the times of Homer. Publius, who was drunk, was maddened by this:

"Get out of the way, thou bladder, thou old carrion, thou bellows! Out of the way, unless thou wouldst have me run thee through and let the air out of thee!"

He seized Mardonius by the throat, and hurled him to a great distance, so that the latter struck a wall, and almost fell. Scúdilo ran up to the doors of the sleeping-chamber and flung them wide open.

The immovable flame of the lamp quivered, and grew paler in the red glow of the torches. And the tribune for the first time beheld the last two scions of Constantius Chlorus.

Gallus seemed tall and strong; but his skin was fine, of a dull white, like that of a young girl; his light-blue eyes were indolent and apathetic; his flaxen-fair hair—a generic sign of the line of Constantine—was curly, and, in fine ringlets, covered his thick, almost obese neck.

Despite the manliness of his body, and the light down of the coming beard, the eighteen-year-old Gallus now seemed a boy,—such was the childish incomprehension and horror on his face; his lips quivered, like those of little children, when they are about to cry; he helplessly blinked his eyelids, pink, and swollen with sleep, with exceedingly light lashes, and, hurriedly crossing himself, he was whispering: "Lord, have mercy upon us! Lord, have mercy upon us!"

Julian was a puny child, and thin, and pale; his face was homely and irregular; his hair was coarse, smooth and black; his nose was too large; the nether lip stood out. But his eyes were amazing—they made his face one of those which, once seen, are impossible to forget,—eyes big, strange, changing, with an unchildlike, strained and unhealthily bright sparkle, which at times seemed insane. Publius, who had often in his youth seen Constantine the Great, reflected:

"This lad will resemble his uncle."

Julian's fear before the soldiers disappeared: he felt wrath. With teeth clenched tight, the panther skin from the couch thrown over his shoulder, he was gazing at Scúdilo intently, from under his brows, and his protruding nether lip was trembling; in his right hand, beneath the panther skin, he was clutching the handle of a slender Persian dagger, secretly given to him as a present by Labda; its point was envenomed.

"A wolf-cub!" uttered one of the legionaries to a comrade of his, indicating Julian.

Scúdilo was already about to cross the threshold of the sleeping-chamber, when a new idea came to Mardonius. He threw aside his useless sword, seized hold of the tribune's raiment, and suddenly began to vociferate in a

piercing, unexpectedly high-pitched voice, like that of an old woman:

"What are ye about, ye scoundrels! How dare ye affront an envoy of the Emperor Constantius? I am delegated to carry away to court these two royal youths. The Augustus has reinstated them in his favour. Here is his order."

"Whatever is he saying? What order?"

Scúdilo glanced at Mardonius; the wrinkled face, like that of a crone, bore witness to the fact that he was, in all reality, an eunuch. The tribune had never hitherto seen Mardonius, but well did he know in what high favour eunuchs were held at the Emperor's court.

Mardonius hastily took out of a chest wherein books were kept, with parchment rolls of Hesiod and Homer, a certain scroll, and gave it to the tribune.

Scúdilo, having unrolled it, blanched: he read only the first few words, beheld the name of the Emperor, who styled himself in the edict as "Our Eternity"; nor did the tribune make out either the year or the month; when he noticed on the roll an enormous governmental seal, so well-known to him, of dark-green wax upon gilt strings,—everything grew dark before his eyes; his knees gave in.

"Forgive us! 'Tis an error. . . ."

"Ah, ye good-for-naughts! Get ye gone! Let there be no trace left of ye! And drunk, to boot! Everything shall be made known to the Emperor!"

Mardonius snatched the document out of Scúdilo's trembling hands.

"Do not work my ruin! We be all brothers, all sinful mortals. I beseech thee in the name of Christ!"

"I know, I know, what ye wreak in the name of Christ, scoundrels! Get ye hence!"

The poor tribune gave the signal for retreat. Thereupon Mardonius picked up his dull sword anew, and, brandishing it, became like a warrior out of *The Iliad*. Only one drunken centurion strove to get at him and yelled:

"Let me at him,—let me at him! I shall run this old bladder through and shall watch him burst!" This drunken chap was led off under the arms.

When their foot-steps had died away, and Mardonius became convinced that the danger had passed, he burst into loud laughter; all the flabby, muliebrile body of the castrate swayed with laughter; he forgot the dignity befitting a pedagogue, and hopped about on his frail bare legs, in his night tunic, crying aloud in his delight:

"My children, oh, my children! Glory be to Hermes! Most deftly have we duped them! 'Tis three years since that edict has been rescinded. The fools, the fools!"

Before sunrise Julian fell into a sound, peaceful slumber. He awoke late, feeling well and joyous, when the blue sky was shining through the high barred window of the sleeping-chamber.

III

THERE was a lesson in the Catechism in the morning. Theology was taught by another teacher, an Arian presbyter, whose hands were clammy, chill and bony, whose eyes were bleakly light, like a frog's,—the monk Eutropius, stooped, as tall as a pole and as lean as a rake. He had an unpleasant habit of smoothing with his hand, after licking its palm on the sly, his sparse, grey little temples, and unfailingly immediately thereafter, of intertwining his fingers and crackling their joints slightly. Julian knew that after the one gesture the other would inevitably follow, and this irritated him. Eutropius wore a black cassock, bepatched and with many stains, asserting that he wore poor raiment out of humility; in reality he was a miser.

Eusebius of Nicomedia, the spiritual guardian of Julian, had chosen this preceptor. The monk suspected a "secret contumacy of reason" in his pupil, which, in the opinion of the teacher, threatened Julian's perdition, unless he mended his ways. Eutropius indefatigably spoke of those feelings which the child ought to cherish toward his, the child's, benefactor, the Emperor Constantius. Whether he were expounding the New Testament, or the Arian dogma, or a prophetic sign,—everything led up to this end, to this "root of a holy obedience and a filial submission." It seemed that deeds of humility and love, that martyr-like sacrifices, were the row of steps whereby the triumphator Constantius was ascend-

ing to the throne. But at times, when the monk spoke of the benefactions of the Emperor shown to him, Julian, the boy would silently gaze straight into the eyes of the teacher with a profound gaze; he knew that at this moment the monk had the same thoughts which he knew his pupil had, and they would avoid speaking of this.

But after that, if Julian would pause, having forgotten the enumeration of the patriarchs of the Ancient Testament, or had poorly memorized some prayer, Eutropius, with the same silence, in enjoyment, would look upon him with his frog-like eyes, and would most softly take his ear between two fingers, as though in a caress; the child would feel two sharp, rough nails sinking into his ear.

Eutropius, despite his apparent moroseness, was possessed of a mocking, and, after his fashion, a merry disposition; he bestowed upon his pupil the tenderest of designations: "My dearest," "The first-born of my soul," "My most beloved son," and scoffed at his kingly descent; every time, after having pinched his ear, when Julian would pale, not from pain but from wrath, the monk would utter fawningly:

"Is Thy Majesty perchance pleased to be wroth with the humble and poor-witted servant Eutropius?"

And, having licked his palm, he would smooth down his little temples and there would follow the slight crackling of his fingers, as he added that it might be a very good thing to instruct bad and lazy boys with the rod occasionally, that even the Holy Writ mentions that the rod enlighteneth the dark and contumacious mind.[3] He spoke of this merely for the sole purpose of taming "the fiendish spirit of pride" in Julian: the boy knew that Eutropius would not dare to carry out his threat; and, besides, the monk himself was in secret con-

vinced that the child would rather die than allow himself to be birched; yet notwithstanding, the teacher spoke of it, often and at length.

Toward the end of the lesson, while explaining some passage from the Holy Writ, Julian happened merely to mention the Antipodes, of which he had heard from Mardonius. He may have done so on purpose, in order to madden the monk; but the latter went off into peals of high-pitched laughter, covering his mouth with the palm of his hand.

"And from whom, my dearest, didst thou hap to hear of the Antipodes? Ah, weel, thou hast given me my fill of laughing, sinner that I am,—thou hast given me my fill of laughing! I know, I know, there is somewhat said about them in the works of that old simpleton Plato. But hast thou actually come to believe that men walk about with their legs in the air?"

Eutropius began to expose the godless heresy of the philosophers: was it not disgraceful to think that men, created in the likeness and image of God, do walk about on their heads, mocking, as it were, the celestial firmament?—But when Julian, feeling the affront heaped upon his beloved sages, reminded him of the sphericity of the earth, Eutropius suddenly ceased laughing and flew into such rage, that, growing all purple in the face, he fell to stamping his feet.

"'Tis Mardonius the pagan that hath dinned into thee this lie, so abominable to God!"

When he was angry, he would speak stammeringly, spluttering saliva; this saliva seemed venomous to Julian. The monk with frenzied fury fell upon all the sages of Hellas; he forgot that there was but a child before him, and, flicked by Julian on a sore spot, this time delivered

a whole sermon, really sincere; he accused old Pythagoras, "who had fallen into dotage," of shameless impudence; of the ravings of Plato, so it seemed to him, it was not even worth while speaking,—he simply called him "abominable"; the teachings of Socrates he called "void of sense."

"Do thou but read about Socrates in Diogenes Laertius," he would impart to Julian with malicious joy, "thou wilt find that he was an usurer; besides that, he hath stained himself with the vilest of vices, of which 'tis unseemly even to speak."

But especial hatred was aroused within him by Epicurus:

"I do not deem this creature even worthy of an answer: the bestiality with which he plunged into all sorts of indulgences, and the baseness with which he became the slave of sensual pleasures, are sufficient indications that he was no man, but a brute."

Having calmed down a little, he began to explain an imperceptible nuance of the Arian dogma, falling with the same fury upon the orthodox church, which he called heretical.

Through the window, from the garden, came a breath of freshness. Julian pretended to be listening attentively to Eutropius; in reality he was thinking of something else,—of his beloved teacher Mardonius; he recalled his sage conversations, his readings of Homer and Hesiod; how dissimilar they were to the lessons of the monk!

Mardonius did not read Homer, but chanted him, according to the custom of the ancient rhapsodists; Labda used to laugh, saying that "he howls, like a hound baying at the moon." And truly, to people unaccustomed

it was an amusing thing: the old eunuch emphasised every foot of the hexameter, waving his hands in rhythm, and there was pomp upon his yellow, wrinkled face. But the piping little voice, like that of an old woman, would grow louder and louder. Julian noted not the hideousness of the old man; the chill of delectation would run down the boy's back; the divine hexameters flowed over one another, surging: he beheld Andromache bidding farewell to Hector, beheld Odysseus yearning after his Ithaca, before the despondent, desolate sea on Calypso's isle. And the heart of Julian would contract from a sweet pain, a yearning after Hellas,—the birthplace of the gods, the birthplace of all those who love beauty. Tears quavered in the voice of the teacher, tears coursed down his yellow cheeks.

At times Mardonius would discourse to him of wisdom, of stern virtue, of the death of heroes for the sake of liberty.—Oh, how dissimilar these speeches were to the speeches of Eutropius!—Mardonius told him of the life of Socrates; when he would come to the *Apologia* before the people of Athens, he would jump up and recite by heart the speech of the philosopher; his face became calm and a trifle contemptuous; it seemed that it was not a man accused, but a man come to judge the people, who was speaking; Socrates begged not for mercy; all the might, all the laws of government, were naught before the freedom of man's spirit; the Athenians might put him to death, but could not deprive his immortal soul of its freedom and happiness.—And when this Scythian, this barbarian, this purchased slave from the shores of the Borysthenes, would exclaim "Freedom!" —to Julian there seemed such splendour in this word that the images of Homer paled before it. And gazing with

wide open, well-nigh mad eyes at his teacher, he would be a-tremble and all of a chill from rapture.

The boy awoke from his reveries, having felt the touch upon his ear of the bony, chill fingers. The lesson in Catechism had come to an end. Getting down on his knees, he recited a prayer of thanksgiving. After that, having gotten out of the clutches of Eutropius, he ran to his own cell, picked up a book, and set out for a favourite little nook of his in the garden, that he might read in freedom. The book was a forbidden one, the *Symposium* of the sacrilegious and impious Plato. On the stairs Julian by chance ran against the departing Eutropius.

"Bide a moment, bide a moment, my dearest one. What sort of little book has Thy Majesty there?"

Julian glanced at him calmly and proffered him the book. On the binding of parchment the monk read the title in large letters: *The Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle.* He gave it back, without unrolling it.

"There, now. Remember,—I am held responsible for thy soul before God and the great sovereign. Read not heretical books, but especially those philosophers, whose vain wisdom I have this day sufficiently exposed."

This was the usual subterfuge of the boy,—he wrapped up the prohibited books in bindings with innocuous titles. Julian had learned to be hypocritical since childhood, with an unchildlike perfection. He deceived with pleasure,—Eutropius especially. At times he resorted to dissimulation, craftiness and hypocrisy without need, from force of habit, with an emotion of malicious and vengeful joy; he deceived everybody, except Mardonius. In Macellum, among the countless idle servants of both sexes, there was no end to the intrigues,

slanders, scandals, suspicions, denunciations. The attendant menials, hoping to rise, watched day and night after the kingly brothers fallen into disfavour.

Ever since Julian remembered himself, he awaited death from day to day, and little by little had almost become inured to fear; he knew that he could not take a step either in the house or in the garden which would evade a thousand eyes. The child heard and understood a great deal, but willy-nilly had to pretend that he neither heard nor understood. Once a few words reached him from a conversation between Eutropius and a spy sent from Constantius, in which Eutropius styled Julian and Gallus "royal puppies." Another time, in a covered way under the windows of the kitchen, the boy chanced to overhear the cook, an old drunkard, irritated by some impertinence of Gallus, saying to his mistress, a slave wench washing the dishes: "May the Lord preserve my soul, Priscilla,—I am amazed how it is that up to now they have not yet strangled them!"

When, after the lesson in Catechism, Julian ran out of the house and beheld the verdure of the trees, he breathed more freely.

The eternal snows of the two-headed summit of the Argæus showed white against the blue sky. There was a breath of coolness from the near-by glaciers. The vistas receded into the distance in impenetrable arches of southern oaks, with small, glistening black-green leaves; here and there a ray broke through and quivered on the verdure of the platanes. Only one side of the garden was unwalled,—where it ended in a precipice. Below, a desert stretched out into the distance, to the very edge of the sky, to Anti-Taurus. The breath of sultriness filled the air. But chilly waters made noise in the garden,—they

tumbled down, rumbling, they flew upward in fountains, they babbled in little rills under the groves of oleanders. Macellum, centuries back, had been the favourite retreat of the luxurious and half-mad King of Cappadocia, Ariarathes.

Julian, with the book of Plato, set out for a secluded cavern, not far from the precipices. There stood ægipedal Pan, playing on a syrinx, near a little sacrificial altar. Out of a lion's maw water streamed into a shell of stone. The entrance was woven over with yellow roses; between them one could see the knolls of the desert, mistily blue, undulant, like the sea; the scent of the tea-roses filled the cavern. It would have been sultry within it, had it not been for the icy rill. The wind brought in the yellow-white petals, strewing earth and water with them. One could hear the humming of the bees in the dark, warm air. Julian, lying on the moss, was reading *The Banquet;* a great deal he did not understand, but the charm of the book lay in its being prohibited.

Laying Plato aside, he again wrapped it up in the binding of *The Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle,* most softly drew near to the sacrificial altar of Pan, glanced up at the joyous god, as at an old fellow-conspirator, and, having dug through a heap of dead leaves, took out from the interior of the altar, broken through and covered with a small board, an object painstakingly wrapped up in stuff. Having unwrapped it carefully, the boy placed it before him. This was his creation, a magnificent toy vessel, a "Liburnian trireme." He approached the bowl of the fountain and lowered the ship into the water. The trireme began to rock on the tiny waves. Everything was ready: three masts, rigging, oars; the prow was gilded; the sails were made from a small

silken rag, presented to him by Labda. There remained but to affix the rudder, and the boy fell to work. Whittling a little board, he would at rare intervals cast a look into the distance, to be glimpsed through the roses, and at the undulant knolls. And over his toy ship he soon forgot all his wrongs, all his hatred and perpetual fear of death. He imagined himself lost in the midst of waves, in a desolate cavern, high above the sea,—a crafty-minded Odysseus, building a ship that he might return to his beloved fatherland.—But there, amid the knolls, where the roofs of Cæsarea gleamed white, like spume upon sea waves, a cross,—a small, glistening cross over a basilica,—perturbed him. That eternal cross! He tried not to see it, consoling himself with his trireme.

"Julian! Julian! Wherever has he gone to? 'Tis time for church. Eutropius is calling thee to church!"

The boy gave a start and hurriedly hid the trireme in the opening of the sacrificial altar; after that he put in order his hair and his dress; and, as he came out of the cavern, his face again assumed the impenetrable, unchild-like expression of a profound hypocrisy,—as though life had flown from him.

Holding Julian by the hand with his own chill, bony one, Eutropius led him off to church.

IV

THE Arian basilica of St. Mauricius was built almost entirely out of the stones of the demolished temple of Apollo.

Rows of columns surrounded the sacred court, or *atrium*, on all four sides. In the middle murmured a fountain for the ablution of the worshippers. In one of the side porches was an ancient sepulchre of carved, darkened oak; in it reposed the wonder-working remains of St. Mamas. Eutropius was compelling Julian and Gallus to build up a stone shrine above these remains. The work of Gallus, who deemed it a pleasant bodily exercise, was progressing; but Julian's wall was forever tumbling down. Eutropius explained this by St. Mamas' rejection of the offering of a youth possessed of the spirit of a fiendish pride.

Around the sepulchre were crowding the sick, awaiting to be made whole. Julian knew the purpose of their coming. One of the Arian monks had a pair of scales in his hands; the pilgrims,—many of them from distant settlements, several parasangs off,—were painstakingly weighing pieces of linen-, silken-, or woolen-stuff, and, having placed them on the grave of St. Mamas, would pray for long,—at times all night through, till the morning; then the same stuff would be weighed anew, for comparison with the former weight; if the stuff was heavier, it signified that their prayer had been answered:

the beneficence of the saint had entered it, like to the dew of night,—had soaked into the silk, linen, or wool, and now the stuff was potent to heal infirmities. But frequently the prayer remained unheard,—the stuff would not gain in weight, and the pilgrims would pass days, weeks, months near the grave. Here was one poor old woman, the crone Theodula: some deemed her half-witted, others a saint; it was already years on end that she would not quit the sepulchre of St. Mamas; her sick daughter, for whose recovery the old woman had at first prayed, had long since died, but Theodula, as before, sent up her prayers for the little bit of faded, tattered stuff.

From the atrium three doors led into the Arian basilica: one into the compartment for men, another into that for the women, and the third into the compartment for the monks and the lower clergy. Together with Gallus and Eutropius, Julian entered the middle door. He was an *anagnost*, or prelector, at St. Mauricius. He was enveloped in a long black garment with wide sleeves; his hair, anointed with oil, was held back by a dark narrow fillet, lest it fall in his eyes while reading. He passed through the midst of the people, his eyes modestly cast down. His pale face was almost involuntarily assuming an expression of hypocritical meekness, necessary and long since become habitual. He mounted the high Arian ambo.

One mural depicted the martyrdom of St. Euphemia: the hangman had seized the head of the sufferer and held it thrown back, immovably; another, having pried her mouth open with pincers, was bringing near it a chalice, probably with molten lead. Next to it was depicted another martyrdom: the same Euphemia was suspended

from a tree by her hands, and a headsman, with an instrument of torture, was flaying the skin from her ensanguined, virginal, almost childlike limbs. Beneath was an inscription: "By the blood of Thy martyrs, O Lord, is Thy church adorned, even as with cloth of scarlet and with byssus."

On the opposite wall were depicted sinners burning in hell; above it was paradise, with the holy saints,—one of them was plucking a rosy fruit off a tree, another sang, playing on a dulcimer, while a third had bent over, leaning on a cloud, and contemplated the hellish tortures with a soft smile of superiority. Below was an inscription: "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." [4]

The sick who had been about the tomb of St. Mamas entered the church: the halt, the blind, the crippled, the debilitated; children on crutches, resembling old men; the possessed, the innocents; there were pale faces with inflamed eyelids, with an expression of dull, hopeless resignation. When the choir would fall still, one could hear in the silence soul-moved sighs of the *calugriæ*,—church widows,—in their dark raiment; or the clanking of the iron harness of Pamphylius, the holy old man,—for the duration of many years he had not exchanged a single word with any man, nor did he now repeat anything save "Lord! Lord! Grant me tears, grant me beatitude, grant me remembrance of death!"

The air was warm, stifling, as in a place underground,—heavy, permeated with incense, the fumes of the sacred lamps, the breath of the sick.

On that day Julian was to read the Apocalypse. The fearful images of the Revelation flashed by: "a pale horse in the clouds, and his name that sat on him was

Death";[5] the tribes of the earth yearn, with a premonition of the end of the world; "the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood";[6] men spake, "and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"[7] Prophecies were repeated: "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."[8] A wail rose upward: "Blessed are the dead!"[9] This was a bloody massacre of the nations: "And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs."[10] And men "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."[11] "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image . . . the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image."[12]

Julian fell silent; there was stillness in the church; in the frightened crowd one could hear naught save the heavy sighs of the innocent, his head knocking against the flags, and the clanking of his chains: "Lord! Lord!

Grant me tears, grant me beatitude, grant me remembrance of death!"

The boy glanced upward, at the enormous spandrel in mosaic between the pillars of the vaulting: it was an Arian representation of Christ,—an ominous, dark, emaciated visage, in a golden aureole and diadem, resembling the diadem of Byzantine emperors,—a visage almost that of an old man, with a long thin nose and sternly compressed lips; with his right hand he was blessing the world; in his left he was holding a book; in the book was written: "Peace be unto ye. I am the light of the world." [13] He was seated on a magnificent throne, and a Roman emperor,—it seemed to Julian to be Constantius—was kissing his feet.

Yet there, below, in the half-murk, where but a single holy lamp glowed, could be seen the marble bas-relief on a sepulchre dating to the first ages of Christianity. Tiny, tender nereids were sculptured thereon, and panthers, and joyous tritons,—and, next to them, Moses, Jonah and the whale, Orpheus, taming feral beasts with the sounds of his lyre; an olive branch, a dove, and a fish —ingenuous symbols of a childlike faith; among them was the Good Shepherd, carrying on his shoulders a sheep, —a sheep strayed and found, the soul of a sinner. He was joyous and simple, this barefooted youth, with a face beardless, meek and humble, like the faces of poor villagers; his was a smile of quiet merriment. To Julian it seemed that none any longer heard or saw the Good Shepherd; and with this little picture of by-gone times there was, for him, linked up some distant dream of his childhood, which at times he was fain to recall and could not. The youth with the sheep on his shoulder was gazing upon him, upon him alone, with a mysterious

interrogation. And Julian was whispering a single word, heard from Mardonius; "Galilean!"

At this instant, falling through the window, the oblique rays of the sun formed a trembling pillar in a cloud of incense, and, swaying softly, this pillar seemed to raise up the ominous dark visage of Christ, which had blazed faith into aureate refulgence. The choir burst forth triumphantly:

"Let all human flesh be silent and stand in fear, and let naught that is of the earth take thought of itself. For the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords cometh to pledge himself and give himself as food for the righteous. And there appear before him Angels, with all power and authority, and cherubim having many eyes, and six-winged seraphim, which do cover their faces and raise their voices in song: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" [14]

And the song, like a tempest, swept over the bowed heads of the worshippers.

The image of the bare-footed youth, the Good Pastor, was receding into the immeasurable distance, but still gazing upon Julian questioningly. And the boy's heart contracted, not from veneration, but from horror before this mystery, which he was not destined to solve during his whole life.

V

From the basilica he returned to Macellum, took with him the finished, painstakingly wrapped "trireme," and, unnoticed of any (Eutropius having gone away for several days), slipped out of the gates of the fortress and ran past the church of St. Mauricius to the adjacent temple of Aphrodite.

The grove of the goddess adjoined the burial grounds of the Christian church. Enmity and disputes, even litigations, between the two temples never ceased. The Christians demanded the demolition of the idol-temple. Olympiodorus, the priest of the goddess, complained against the watchmen of the church,—of nights they chopped down in secret the century-old cypresses of the protected grove, and they dug graves for the Christian dead in the soil dedicated to Aphrodite.

Julian set foot in the grove. The warm air enveloped him. The mid-day sultriness had made drops of resin exude out of the grey fibrous bark of the cypresses. To Julian the breath of the goddess seemed to be wafted through the half-murk. Sculptures showed whitely among the trees. Here was Eros, drawing taut the string of his bow,—probably it had been some watchman of the church, who, making mock of the idol, had broken off the marble bow: together with both hands of the god, the weapon of love reposed on the grass, near the pediment of the statue; but the handless boy, with one

chubby little leg thrust forward, was still aiming with a sprightly smile, as of yore.

Julian entered the small house of Olympiodorus, the priest. The rooms were little, cramped, almost toy-like, but snug; there was no luxury of any sort,—poverty rather; no rugs, no silver; simple floors of stone; benches and chairs of wood; cheap amphoræ of baked clay. But there was exquisiteness in every trifle. The handle of the simple kitchen lamp depicted Poseidon with his trident,—it was of ancient, skilled craftsmanship. At times Julian would for long admire the graceful lines of some simple clay amphora that held only cheap olive oil. Everywhere on the walls one beheld light frescoes,—now a nereid mounted on a scaly water-horse; now a dancing young goddess in a long peplum with fluttering folds.

Everything in the sun-flooded little house was laughing: the nereids laughed on the walls, the dancing goddesses, the tritons,—even the scaly sea-horses; the copper Poseidon on the handle of the lamp laughed; the same laughter was also on the faces of the dwellers in the house,—they had been born joyous: two dozen tasty olives, white wheaten bread, a cluster of grapes, a few goblets of wine mixed with water, sufficed to make a whole banquet in their estimation, and to have the wife of Olympiodorus, Diophana, hang a laurel wreath on the door as a mark of the celebration.

Julian entered the little garden of the atrium. Under the open sky played the jet of a fountain. Alongside of it, amid the narcissi, acanthi, tulips and myrtles, stood a small sculpture of Hermes, winged, laughing like all things in this house, poised ready to soar up and away. Over the flower beds, in the sunlight, fluttered bees and butterflies.

Under the light shade of a portico in the court Olympiodorus and his seventeen-year-old daughter Amaryllis were playing the exquisite Attic game of *kottabos*. Upon a little post, driven into the ground, swung a transverse beam, like to the beam of a pair of scales; at either end of it was suspended a small cup, with a vessel of water and a small brazen statuette placed underneath each one. The object of the game was to throw wine from a goblet, at a certain distance, in such a manner as to get it in one of the little cups, and also, as the cup descended, to have it strike against a statuette.

"Play, play, now. 'Tis thy turn!" Amaryllis was crying.

"One, two, three!"

Olympiodorus threw the wine, and missed; his laughter was child-like; it was odd to see this tall man, with grey showing in his hair, absorbed in the game like an infant.

The girl, with a graceful motion of her bare arm, after throwing back her lilac tunic, let the wine fly,—and the little cup of the kottabos rang out, having struck. Amaryllis fell to clapping her hands and burst into laughter.

Suddenly Julian appeared at the portals. They all fell to kissing and hugging him. Amaryllis was crying:

"Diophana! Where art thou? Behold our guest! Come see our guest. Quick! Quick!"

Diophana came running from the kitchen.

"Julian, my darling boy! Thou hast grown thinner, 'twould seem? 'Tis long since we have seen thee. . . ."

And she added, glowing with merriment:

"Rejoice, my children. We shall hold a feast this day.

I shall prepare wreaths of roses, fry three perch, and bake sweet cakes with ginger. . . ."

At this moment a young female slave approached and whispered to Olympiodorus that a rich patrician lady from Cæsarea was desirous of seeing him, having business with the priest of Aphrodite. He went out. Julian and Amaryllis fell to playing at kottabos.

It was then that, inaudibly, there appeared on the threshold a girl of ten years, thin, pale, and with flaxen hair,—Psyche, the younger daughter of Olympiodorus. She had enormous eyes, blue and sad. She alone in all the house seemed undedicate to Aphrodite, a stranger to the general joyousness. She led a life apart, remaining plunged in pensiveness when all laughed, and none knew what she sorrowed over, or over what she rejoiced. Her father deemed her a pitiful being, incurably ill, spoiled by the evil eye, by the spells of his eternal enemies the Galileans: out of vengeance they had taken away his child; Amaryllis of the black curls was the favourite daughter of Olympiodorus, but her mother, on the sly, pampered Psyche and with jealous passion loved the ailing child, without understanding its inner life.

Psyche, keeping it a secret from her father, frequented the basilica of St. Mauricius. The caresses of her mother were of no avail, nor supplications, nor threats. The priest, in despair, had renounced Psyche. When she was spoken of, his face became clouded and assumed an evil expression. He asserted that, evidently because of the impiety of the child, his vineyard, formerly blessed by Aphrodite, had begun yielding less fruit, inasmuch as there sufficed but the little golden cross which the girl wore on her bosom to defile the temple.

"Why dost thou go to church?" Julian had once asked her.

"I know not. 'Tis so fine there. Hast thou seen the Good Shepherd?"

"Yes, I have seen Him. The Galilean! How didst thou come to know of Him?"

"Theodula, the little old woman, was telling me about Him. Ever since then I have been going to church.—And why, Julian,—do tell me,—why is it that they all dislike Him so?"

Olympiodorus returned, exulting, and told of his conversation with the patrician: she was a young, well-born maid; her bridegroom had ceased to love her; she thought that he was bewitched by the spells of a rival,—many times had she gone to the Christian church; had prayed assiduously at the sepulchre of St. Mamas. Neither fasts, nor vigils, nor prayers, had availed. "For how can the Christians help!" Olympiodorus had concluded with contempt, and glanced from under his brows at Psyche, who was attentively listening. "And so the Christian woman has come to me: Aphrodite shall make her whole!"

He triumphantly indicated two trussed white doves: the Christian had requested that they be brought as a sacrifice to the goddess. Amaryllis, taking the doves in her hands, was kissing their delicate, rosy bills, and maintained that it was a pity to slay them.

"Dost thou know what, father? We shall bring them in sacrifice without slaughter."

"How?—Is a sacrifice possible without blood?"

"Why, here is how. Let us free them. They shall fly straight in the sky, to the throne of Aphrodite. Is it

not so? The goddess is there, in the sky. She shall accept them. Do allow it, please,—darling!"

Amaryllis was kissing him so tenderly that he had not the heart to refuse. Thereupon the girl untied and released the doves. They fluttered their white wings with joyous swishing and flew up in the sky,—to the throne of Aphrodite. Shielding his eyes with his hand, the priest watched the sacrifice of the Christian woman disappearing in the sky. And Amaryllis was jumping in her delight, clapping her palms:

"Aphrodite! Aphrodite! Accept the bloodless sacrifice."

Olympiodorus went away. Julian solemnly and timidly drew near to Amaryllis. His voice broke, his cheeks flared up, as he uttered the girl's name in a low voice.

"Amaryllis! I have brought thee . . ."

"Yea,—I have for long been wanting to ask what thou hast there?"

"A trireme . . ."

"A trireme? What kind? What is it for? What art thou talking about?"

"A real one,—'tis Liburnian . . ."

He fell rapidly to untying his gift, but suddenly felt an unsurmountable shame. Amaryllis looked on in incomprehension. He became altogether confused, and looked up at her imploringly, launching the toy ship upon the tiny waves of the fountain.

"Think not meanly of it, Amaryllis,—the trireme is real. With sails. Thou canst see,—it floats, and hath a rudder. . . ."

But Amaryllis was loudly laughing over the present:

"Of what use is a trireme to me? One will not sail far with it. 'Tis a ship for mice or cicadas. Better present

it to Psyche; she will be very glad. See, how she eyes it."

Julian was affronted. He strove to assume an air of indifference, but felt the tears constrict his throat, felt the corners of his lips quiver and droop. He made a desperate effort, held back his tears, and said:

"I see thou dost not understand aught . . ."

He considered a while and added:

"Thou dost not understand aught of art!"

But Amaryllis burst into still louder laughter. To round out the insult, she was summoned to see her bridegroom, a rich merchant of Samos. He perfumed himself entirely too much, dressed without taste, and made grammatical errors in conversation. Julian hated him. The entire house grew dark, and joy vanished when he learned that the Samosatian had come. From an adjacent room came the joyous prattling of Amaryllis and the voice of her bridegroom. Julian seized his valuable, genuine Liburnian trireme, which had cost him so much toil, broke the mast, tore off the sails, tangled up the rigging, trampled and put out of shape the ship, without uttering a word, in quiet fury, to the horror of Psyche.

Amaryllis returned. Upon her face were the traces of an extraneous happiness,—that surplus excess of the joy of love which makes it a matter of small moment to young girls whom they embrace and kiss.

"Julian, forgive me; I have hurt thee. Well, now, do forgive me, my dear boy! There, see how I love thee . . . love thee . . ."

And, before he had time to recover, Amaryllis, throwing her tunic back, entwined his neck with her bare, fresh arms. His heart sank from a delectable fear; he beheld, nearer to him than ever before, her large, dewy

black eyes; there was a strong fragrance about her, like that of flowers. The boy's head swam. She was pressing his body to her bosom. He closed his eyes, and felt a kiss upon his lips.

"Amaryllis! Amaryllis! Wherever art thou?"

It was the voice of the Samosatian. Julian thrust the girl from him with all his strength. His heart contracted from pain and hatred. He fell to shouting: "Leave me, leave me!"—tore himself free and ran away.

"Julian! Julian!"

Paying no heed, he ran away from the house, through the vineyard, through the grove of cypresses, and came to a pause only before the temple of Aphrodite. He heard them calling him; heard the merry voice of Diophana, announcing that the ginger cakes were ready, and made no response. They looked for him. He hid in the laurel bushes near the pediment of Eros and waited till they had passed. They thought that he had run off to Macellum; everybody in this house had become accustomed to his morose eccentricities.

When everything had quieted down, he came out of his ambuscade and glanced at the temple of the goddess of love. It stood on a knoll, and was exposed on all sides. The white marble of the Ionic columns, flooded by the sun, was tenderly bathed in the azure; and the dark, warm azure rejoiced, embracing this marble, as cold and as white as snow; on both corners its fronton was adorned by two acroteria in the shape of griffons: with uplifted, taloned paw, with gaping aquiline beak, with round feminine nipples, each stood out proudly in sharp outlines against the blue skies.

Julian ascended the steps into the portico, softly opened the unlocked brazen door, and entered the in-

terior of the temple,—the sacred naos. Quiet and coolness were wafted upon him.

The declining sun still lit up the upper row of the capitals with their slender whorls, resembling curled locks, but below there was already murk. From the tripod came an odour of the ashes of burnt myrrh. Julian timidly raised up his eyes, leaning against the wall and holding his breath,—and became rooted to the spot.

This was she. Beneath the open sky, in the centre of the temple, stood Aphrodite Anadyomene,—chill, white, new-born of the foam, in all her unashamed nudity. The goddess seemed gazing with a smile at the sky and the sea, wondering at the splendid beauty of the universe, knowing not as yet that it was but her own charm, reflected in the sky and the sea, as in eternal mirrors. The touch of garments had not yet defiled her. Thus stood she, all virginal and all nude, like the cloudless, almost black-blue sky over her head.

Julian gazed upon her insatiably. Time stood still. Suddenly he felt a tremor of reverence course over his body. And the boy in the dark monastic raiment sank on his knees before Aphrodite,—his face upturned, his hands pressed to his heart.

Then, still at a distance, still with timidity, he sat down on the pediment of a column, taking not his eyes off her; his cheek was pressed against the cold marble. The silence was descending into his soul. He fell into a doze; but even through his slumber he felt her presence: she was coming down to him, nearer and nearer; her slender white arms entwined his neck. The child surrendered himself with a dispassionate smile to her dispassionate embraces. The cold chill of the marble penetrated to the depths of his heart. These sacred embraces

did not resemble the feverishly passionate, oppressive, fervid embraces of Amaryllis. His soul was liberating itself from earthly love. This was that final quietude, like to some ambrosian night of Homer, like to the sweet repose of death . . .

. . . . . .

When he awoke it was dark. In the quadrangle of open sky stars twinkled. The sickle of the moon threw a glory over the head of Aphrodite. Julian arose. Olympiodorus must have come, but had not noticed the boy, or had not wanted to awaken him, having surmised his grief. Embers were now glowing on the bronze tripod, and little swirls of aromatic smoke were ascending towards the face of the goddess. Julian approached, took out of a chrysolite bowl between the legs of the tripod a few grains of fragrant resin, and cast it on the embers of the altar; the smoke swirled up more copiously. And the rosy reflection of the fire flared up, like a light glow of life, on the face of the goddess, blending with the glitter of the new-born moon. Aphrodite-Urania, the pure, seemed to be coming down from the stars to earth.

Julian bent over and kissed the feet of the statue.

He prayed to her:

"Aphrodite! Aphrodite! I shall love thee for all eternity!"

And his tears fell upon the marble feet of the statue.

VI

On the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, in one of the filthy and poverty-stricken suburbs of Syrian Seleucia, the commercial port of Great Antioch, the crooked, narrow streets debouched upon a square near the wharf; the sea was not to be seen for the forest of masts and rigging.

The houses consisted of clay-daubed coops, piled in disorder one upon another. The side facing the street was occasionally covered by a tattered rug, resembling a dirty rag, or by a matting. In all these nooks, coops, little lanes, with their oppressive odour of slops, of laundries and baths for labourers, there swarmed motley, poor, hungry riff-raff.

The sun, which had been scorching the earth with a drought, had gone down. Twilight was falling. The sultriness, the dust, the murk, had come to hang still more heavily over the town. From the market-place was wafted a stifling odour of meat and vegetables that had lain all day in the blaze. Half-naked slaves from the ships bore bales upon their shoulders, down the gangways; one side of their head was shaven; through their tatters one could see the wales of blows; in the case of many a brand showed blackly over the entire face, burned with heated iron: the two Latin letters *C* and *F*, which signified *Cave Furem*—'Ware the Thief.

Lights were being lit. Despite the approach of night,

the bustle and hum in the cramped lanes did not quiet down. From a near-by smithy could be heard the ear-splitting strokes of a hammer on iron plates; the glow of the forge flared up; the soot swirled upward. Next to it, the slave bakers of bread, naked, covered from head to foot with white flour dust, with red, heat-inflamed eyelids, were putting loaves in an oven. A cobbler, in his open-air, miserable little shop, whence came an odour of glue and leather, was sewing away on boots by the light of a little lamp, squatting on his heels and chanting songs in the tongue of the barbarians at the top of his lungs. Across the lane separating their coops, two beldams, veritable witches, with dishevelled grey hair, were yelling and squabbling, stretching forth their hands to come to grapples over a rope, on which their tatters were hung out to dry, while below them a fish-monger, hurrying from afar to get to the mart in the morning, on a bony, galled nag, was bringing in wicker baskets a whole mountain of fish far from fresh, —passers-by turned away from the unbearable stench and cursed. A chubby-cheeked little Judæan, with red curls, finding delectation in the deafening din, was beating an enormous copper basin. Other children,—mere mites, without number, who were born and died in their hundreds in this poverty,—were sprawling about, squealing like suckling pigs, around puddles with orange peels and eggshells. In lanes still darker and more suspicious, where dwelt the petty thieves, where the little inns reeked of dankness and sour wine, the mariners from all the ends of the world were strolling around, embracing one another and brawling drunken songs. Over the gates of a lupanarium was suspended a lanthorn with an impudicious image, dedicated to the god Priapus;

and when the *centum,* or hanging, was lifted from the doors, one could see within a cramped row of little cubicles, resembling stalls; over each was an inscription with the price; in the stuffy darkness the bodies of the women glowed whitely.

And above all this noise and hubbub, over all this human filth and squalor, could be heard the deep sighs of the incoming tide, the grumbling of the unseen sea.

Near the very windows of the cellar kitchen of a Phœnician shopkeeper, some tatterdemalions were dicing and gossiping. From the kitchen there reached them, in warm swirls, the fumes of boiling grease, the odour of condiments and fried game. The hungry men inhaled it, shutting their eyes in delectation. A Christian, a dyer of purple, driven out of a rich Tyrian shop for thievery, was speaking, greedily licking a leaf of mallow which the cook had thrown out.

" 'Tis a dreadful thing even to speak of towards nightfall,—I mean the goings on in Antioch, good folk. The other day the famished people tore to pieces the prefect Theophilus. But what it was for, God knows. When they had done their work, they recalled that the poor fellow had been a kind man and a pious. They say that the Cæsar had pointed him out to the people . . ."

A decrepit little ancient, a very skilled pickpocket, uttered:

"I once beheld the Cæsar. I do not know,—he proved to my liking. He was youngish; his hair, now, was as fair as flax; his little face was well-fed, yet rather kindly. But how many murders, Lord,—how many murders! We are in a state of rapine. 'Tis a fearful thing to walk through the streets."

"All these things do not come from the Cæsar, but from his wife, Constantina. She is a witch!"

Men of strange appearance drew near to those speaking, and bent over, as though desiring to take part in the talk. Had the light from the kitchen oven been stronger, it would have been discernible that their faces were made up, that their garments were soiled and torn unnaturally, like those of theatrical beggars. Despite their tatters, the hands of the dirtiest among them were white, slender, with pink, filed nails. One of them spoke, most softly, in the ear of a companion:

"Hearken, Agamemnon,—here, too, they speak of the Cæsar."

He who was called Agamemnon appeared inebriated; he was swaying; his beard, unnaturally bushy and long, made him resemble a bandit out of a fairy-tale; but his eyes were kindly, of a clear blue, and child-like in expression. His companions were restraining him in frightened whispers:

"Be more careful!"

The petty pickpocket began speaking in a querulous voice, as though he were chanting:

"Nay, do ye but tell me, fellow-men and brethren, is it a goodly state? Bread is getting dearer from day to day; folk are dying off like flies. And all of a sudden . . . Nay, do ye but think upon it,—is it seemly?—The other day there arrives out of Egypt a most enormous three-masted ship; we waxed joyous, thinking it freighted with bread. Cæsar, so they said, had imported it, that he might feed the people. And what should it turn out to be,—well, what think ye, good people? Dust out of Alexandria,—a special kind, pink, Libyan, for athletes to rub themselves with; dust for the Cæsar's

own gladiators at court; dust, instead of bread! Eh? Is that right?" he concluded, making indignant signs with his nimble, thievish fingers.

Agamemnon was nudging a companion:

"Ask his name. His name!"

"Quiet . . . it can not be done. Later . . ."

The wool-carder remarked:

"In our Seleucia 'tis quiet so far. But in Antioch there be treacheries, denunciations, raids . . ."

The dyer, who had given a final lick to the mallow and thrown it away, having become convinced that it had lost savour, grumbled under his nose, gloomily:

"Well, now, by God's grace, human flesh and blood shall soon be cheaper than bread and wine . . ."

The wool-carder, a hopeless drunkard and a philosopher, was heaving profound sighs:

"Oho-ho-ho! We be poor miserable mannikins! The blessed Olympians play with us as with little balls,—now to the right, now to the left, now up, now down,—mortals weep, while the gods laugh."

One of Agamemnon's companions had managed to insinuate himself into the conversation. Dextrously, with seeming casualness, he wormed out the names of the speakers; he had overheard even what a journeyman cobbler had imparted in the ear of the wool-carder concerning a conspiracy against the life of the Cæsar,—planned among the soldiers of the Prætoria. Then, having drawn aside, he inscribed the names with an exquisite stylus upon his waxen tablets, where were treasured many others.

At this juncture there reached them, from the market square, the hoarse, muffled sounds of a water-organ,—resembling the roar of some subterranean monster; its

sounds seemed to partake both of laughter and weeping; a blind Christian slave near the entrance of a show-booth, for four oboli a day, pumped up the water which created in the machine these ludicrous and dolorous weeping sounds.

Agamemnon dragged off his companions into a booth, stretched over, on the manner of a tent, with blue, silver-starred stuff. A lanthorn lit up a blackboard,—an advertisement of the forthcoming spectacle, chalked up in Syriac and Greek.

It was stuffy within. There was a smell of garlic, and of the soot of the shallow oil lamps. To supplement the organs, two piercing flutes were squeaking, and a black Æthiopian, rolling the whites of his eyes, thrummed upon his tambours. A dancer was jumping and turning somersaults upon a rope, clapping his hands in time with the music. He was singing a little catch, the rage of the day:

"Huc, huc convenite nunc
Spatolocinædi!
Pedem tendite,
Cursum addite."

This thin, pug-nosed funambulist was old, repulsive, and merry. From his shaven forehead sweat coursed down, mixed with rouge; his wrinkles, clogged up with whitening, resembled the cracks of a wall with its white-wash melting under the rain.

When he had gone off, the organ and the flute grew still. A fifteen-year-old girl ran out on the boards, to perform a notorious dance, the *Cordax*, of which the people were madly fond. The fathers of the church thundered against it, the laws of Rome interdicted it,—

naught availed: the Cordax was danced everywhere, by the poor and the rich, by the wives of the senators and by street dancing wenches.

Agamemnon uttered with delight:

"What a girl!"

Thanks to the fists of his companion, he had jostled his way into the front row.

The slight, swarthy body of the Nubian girl was entwined,—only around her hips,—by some stuff that was almost æthereal, and of a neutral tint; her hair rose over her head in fine, downy-black curls, like those of the women of Æthiopia; her face, of a purely Ægyptian mould, recalled the faces of Sphinxes.

The crotalitrix began dancing as if she were bored, indolently and lackadaisically. Over her head, in her slender hands, the *crotala*, or copper clappers, were clinking almost inaudibly.

Then her movements quickened. And suddenly, from underneath their long lashes, her yellow eyes flashed,—translucent, joyful, like the eyes of feral beasts. She straightened up, and the copper clappers rang out piercingly, with such a challenge that all the throng shivered. Thereupon the girl began to whirl,—quick, slender, sinuous, like a little serpent. Her nostrils dilated. A strange cry escaped from her throat. At every impulsive movement two small, dark breasts, like two ripe fruits in a wind, quivered, drawn in by their net of green silk,—and their pointed, strongly rouged nipples glowed redly, protruding from underneath.

The crowd roared with delight. Agamemnon was waxing insane,—his companions were restraining him by his arms.

Suddenly the girl stopped, as if in exhaustion. A slight

tremor ran over her swarthy limbs, from her head to her feet. There fell a silence. Over the head of the Nubian, thrown back, with an almost imperceptible, dying ringing, rapidly and gently, like the two wings of a captured butterfly, quivered the clappers. The fire had gone out of her eyes, but in their very depths flickered two sparks. Her face was stern, ominous, but upon the excessively thick, red lips,—the lips of a Sphinx,—trembled a faint smile. And, in the silence, the sound of the crotala died away.

The crowd set up such an outcry and began to clap so that the blue stuff with the spangles began to sway, as canvas under a storm, and the proprietor thought that his booth would collapse. Agamemnon's companions could not restrain him. Having lifted up the curtain he darted headlong up on the stage, across the boards, and into the little room for the dancing wenches and the mimes. His comrades were whispering in his ear:

"Wait! To-morrow everything will be arranged. But now they may . . ."

Agamemnon cut them short:

"Nay,—now!"

He approached the proprietor, Mirmex, a crafty, grey-haired Greek, and at once, almost without any explanations, poured out into the lap of his tunic a handful of gold coins.

"Is the crotalitrix thine?"

"Ay. What is my master's desire?"

Mirmex was in amaze, looking, alternately, now at the torn raiment of Agamemnon, now at the gold.

"What do they call thee, girl?"

"Phyllis."

He gave her money as well, without counting it. The Greek whispered something in the ear of Phyllis. She tossed up high the chinking coins, caught them in her palm, and, after bursting into laughter, turned the flash of her yellow eyes upon Agamemnon. He said:

"Come with me."

Phyllis threw over her swarthy shoulders a dark chlamys, and glided out with him into the street. She asked:

"Whither?"

"I know not."

"To thee?"

"It can not be. I live in Antioch."

"I came but this day on a ship, and know naught."

"What is to be done, then?"

"Wait; I saw just a while ago in a near-by lane an unlocked temple of Priapus. Let us thither!"

Laughing, Phyllis dragged him off. His comrades would have followed. Said he:

"No need! Remain here."

"Be careful! Take a weapon, at least. This suburb is dangerous at night." And, taking a short sword, somewhat like a dagger, with a precious hilt, from underneath his raiment, one of his companions tendered it to him respectfully.

Stumbling in the murk, Agamemnon and Phyllis entered a deep, dark lane, at a short distance from the mart.

"Here, here! Fear not! Enter!"

They stepped within the porch of the small, deserted temple; a little lamp suspended on small chains, about to expire, lit up faintly the rude, time-worn pillars.

"Shut-to the door."

And Phyllis noiselessly cast off upon the stone floor her dark, soft chlamys. She was noiselessly laughing. As Agamemnon squeezed her in his embraces, it seemed to him that a fearful, burning serpent had twined about his body. The yellow feral eyes became enormous.

But at this moment, from the interior of the temple, there burst forth a piercing gabble and a beating of white wings, which raised such a wind that the lamp almost went out. Agamemnon released Phyllis and stammered out:

"Whatever may this be?"

White phantoms flitted through the darkness. Agamemnon, turned poltroon, made the sign of the cross.

"But whatever may this be? The power of the Cross be with us! . . ."

Suddenly something nipped his leg hard. He cried out from pain and fright; he seized one unknown foe by the throat, another he ran through with his sword. There arose deafening clamour, squealing, gabbling, and beating of wings. The lamp, for the last time before expiring, flared up,—and Phyllis cried out, laughing:

"Why, these are geese,—the sacred geese of Priapus! Whatever hast thou wrought! . . ."

The trembling and pale conqueror stood holding an ensanguined sword in one hand,—the slaughtered goose in the other. Loud voices were heard from the street, and a whole crowd bearing torches burst into the temple. At their head was Scabra,—an old priestess of Priapus. She had been peaceably, as was her wont, imbibing wine in a neighbouring little inn, when she had heard the outcries of the sacred geese and had hastened to their succour with a crowd of vagrants. Her hooked red nose, her dishevelled grey hair, her eyes with a keen glitter,

like two steel blades, made her resemble a fury. She was vociferating:

"Help! Help! The temple is defiled! The sacred geese of Priapus are slain! Behold, these be Christians and infidels! Hold them!"

Phyllis, covering her head with her mantle, had fled. The crowd was dragging Agamemnon along to the market square; he had become so distraught that he did not let the dead goose out of his hands. Scabra was summoning the *agoranomi,*—the guardians of the market-place. With every instant the mob was increasing. Agamemnon's comrades came running to his aid. But it was too late: from the dens, from the inns, from the shops, from the blind alleys, people attracted by the uproar came rushing headlong. Their faces bore that expression of gleeful curiosity which is always in evidence at a street happening. A blacksmith was running with a hammer in his hands, not to be outdone by the two old neighbour women, and the bread maker, besmeared with dough; the cobbler, too, was running headlong, limping; and bringing up the tail of the entire procession the red-haired mite of a Judæan lad flew along, with squealing and laughter, striking the deafening copper bason, as though ringing a tocsin. Scabra was clamouring, with her nails sunk into the raiment of Agamemnon:

"Bide a while! I shall get at thy abominable beard! Nary a bit of it will I leave! Ah, thou carrion, thou crowbait! Why, thou art not worth the rope they will hang thee with!"

The sleepy agoranomi finally appeared, resembling thieves rather than the keepers of the peace. There was such uproar, laughter and cursing in the crowd that no one understood what was what. Some one was yelling:

"Murderers!"; others, "Robbery!"; others still, "Fire!" But at this moment, overcoming all, there pealed forth the thunderous voice of a half-naked, red-haired giant, with a face covered with freckles, by vocation an attendant at the baths,—by avocation, an orator of the market-place.

"Fellow citizens! I have long been watching this scoundrel and his companions. They are noting down names. These be spies,—spies of the Cæsar!"

Scabra, fulfilling her long-held intention, sunk one hand into the beard of Agamemnon, the other into his hair. He wanted to thrust her from him, but she jerked with all her might,—and the long, black beard and the thick hair remained in her hands; the hag crashed flat on her back. Before the people, instead of Agamemnon, stood a handsome youth with wavy, soft hair as light as flax, and with a small beard. The crowd grew still from amazement. Then the voice of the bath-attendant again boomed forth:

"Behold, citizens,—these be disguised informers!"

Some one cried out: "Kill them! Kill them!"

The mob swayed. Stones flew. His comrades surrounded Agamemnon and bared their swords. The wool-carder was cast down at the first stroke; he fell, inundated with blood. The little Judæan with the copper bason was trampled to death. All faces grew bestial.

At this moment ten huge Paphlagonian slaves with a purple litter on their shoulders made a path through the mob.

"Saved!" cried out the flaxen-fair youth, and darted with one of his companions into the litter. The Paphlagonians hoisted them up on their shoulders and started off at a run. The infuriated mob would have stopped

and torn them into pieces, had not some one cried out:

"Do ye not see, citizens? 'Tis the Cæsar,—the Cæsar Gallus himself!"

The populace was rooted to the spot in horror. The purple litter, swaying on the backs of the slaves, like a boat upon waves, was disappearing in the distance of an unlit street.

Six years had passed since that day when Julian and Gallus had been confined to the Cappadocian fortress of Macellum. The Emperor Constantius had restored them to his favour. The nineteen-year-old Julian had been summoned to Constantinople, and afterwards permitted to travel through the cities of Asia Minor; the Emperor had Gallus made his co-regent, a Cæsar, and had given the East over to his governing. However, the unexpected favour boded no good. Constantius was fond of striking down his enemies after lulling them with caresses.

"Well, Glycon, no matter how Constantina may urge me, I shall never more appear in the street in false hair. 'Tis done with!"

"We forewarned Thy Majesty . . ."

But the Cæsar, reclining on the soft cushions of the litter, had already forgotten his recent fright. He was laughing:

"Glycon! Glycon! Didst see how the accursed hag did tumble flat on her back with the beard in her hands? I do but look,—and she is already down!"

When they entered the castle, the Cæsar issued orders:

"A bath and supper,—quick! I have grown famished."

A courtier drew near with a letter.

"What is it? Nay, nay,—let business matters go till to-morrow morning . . ."

"Gracious Cæsar, 'tis an important letter,—straight from the camp of the Emperor Constantius."

"From Constantius! What is it? Let me have it . . ."

He broke the seal, read the letter through, and blanched; his knees gave way under him; had the attendants not supported him, Gallus would have fallen. The Emperor, in choice—even flattering—terms, invited his "gently beloved" cousin to Mediolanum; at the same time he commanded that the two legions stationed at Antioch,—the sole defence of Gallus,—be without any delay despatched to him, Constantius. Evidently, he was desirous of disarming and enticing his foe. When the Cæsar had come to, he uttered in a faint voice:

"Summon my wife . . ."

"The spouse of the Gracious Sovereign has just been pleased to depart for Antioch."

"What? And does she know naught of this?"

"She knows naught."

"Lord! Lord! But what is all this? Without her! . . . Tell the Emperor's messenger. . . . But nay, stay,—tell him naught. I know not. . . . For what can I do without her? Despatch a runner. Say that the Cæsar implores her to return. . . . Lord, what is to be done?"

He was pacing, distracted, clutching his head, twisting his soft, light little beard with trembling fingers, and repeating helplessly:

"Nay, nay, I shall not go, under any circumstances. Better death. . . . O, I know Constantius!"

Another courtier approached him with a document:

"From Cæsar's spouse. Departing, she requested that thou sign it."

"What? Again a sentence of death?—Clematius of

Alexandria. . . . Nay, nay, 'tis too much. It must not be. . . . Three a day!"

"Thy spouse willed . . ."

"Eh, 'tis all one! Give me the quill! Now 'tis all one. . . . Only why did she go away? For what can I do alone . . ."

And, having signed the sentence, he looked up with his blue, infantile and kindly eyes.

"The bath is ready; the supper will be served at once."

"Supper? No need. . . . However,—what does it consist of?"

"There are truffles."

"Fresh?"

"But now off the ship from Africa."

"Should I sustain myself, perhaps? Eh? What think ye, my friends? I have grown so faint. . . . Truffles? I was thinking of them even in the morning . . ."

Over his vacant face flitted a care-free smile.

Before entering the cool water, turbidly white and opaline from aromatic substances, the Cæsar uttered, with a gesture of abandon:

" 'Tis all one—'tis all one! . . . One must not ponder upon it. . . . Lord, have mercy upon us sinners! . . . Perhaps Constantina may e'en patch up everything somehow?"

His well-fed, rosy face grew altogether merry, as, with accustomed pleasure, he plunged into the fragrant laver:

"Tell the cook,—sharp red sauce for the truffles!"

VII

In the cities of Asia Minor,—Nicomedia, Pergamos, Smyrna,—the nineteen-year-old Julian, who was seeking Hellenic wisdom, heard of the famous theurgist and sophist, Iamblicus of Chalcis, disciple of Porphyrius the Neoplatonist—the Divine Iamblicus, as he was styled. He set out to visit him in the city of Ephesus.

Iamblichus was a little old man,—small, thin, wrinkled. He was fond of complaining about his ailments,—podagra, arthralgia, headaches; he upbraided the leeches, but assiduously underwent treatments; he spoke with delectation of epithems, infusions, medicaments, plaisters; went dressed in a soft and warm double tunic, even in summer, and could not, in any way, have his fill of warmth; he loved the sun like a lizard. From his early youth Iamblicus had disaccustomed himself to a meat diet, and felt an aversion for it,—he could not understand how men could eat that which had life. His female servant prepared for him a special porridge of barley meal, a little warm wine, and honey; the old man could not masticate even bread with his toothless jaws.

A multitude of disciples,—respectful, venerating,—from Rome, Antioch, Carthage, Ægypt, Mesopotamia, Persia,—thronged about him, all believing that Iamblichus wrought miracles. He treated them as a father who had grown bored with having so many small helpless children. When they would fall to wrangling or quarrelling, the master would make a gesture of hopelessness,

his face wrinkling up as if from pain. He spoke in a quiet voice, and the louder the uproar of the disputants grew, the quieter did Iamblicus speak; he could not bear noise; he hated loud voices and creaking sandals.

Julian was gazing with disenchantment upon the capricious, shivering, ailing little ancient, unable to comprehend what power attracted men to him. He recalled the story of how his disciples had one night beheld the Divine One levitated by some miraculous force during prayer, ten ells above ground, and surrounded with an aureate glory; another story of how the Master, in the Syrian city of Gadara, had evoked out of two hot springs Eros and Anteros,—one joyous, light-curled, the other sorrowful, dark,—both genii of love; both nuzzled against Iamblicus, like children, and at a wave of his hand evanished. Julian bent an attentive ear to that which the Master was saying, and could not find any swaying power in his words. The metaphysics of the school of Porphyrius seemed to Julian dead, dry, and excruciatingly intricate. Iamblicus seemed to be playing, overcoming dialectic difficulties in disputations. In his teaching anent God, anent the universe, anent Ideas, anent the Triad of Plotinus, there was a profound bookish knowledge,—but never a spark of life. That was not what Julian expected. Yet expect he did, notwithstanding.

Iamblicus had strange, green eyes, which stood out still more sharply because of the darkened, wrinkled skin of his face,—of such a greenish tint, is, sometimes, the evening sky, in the midst of dark clouds, before a thunder storm. To Julian it seemed that in these eyes, somehow not human, but still less divine, there sparkled that esoteric *ophidian* wisdom, of which Iamblicus never

uttered a word to his disciples.—But suddenly, in a tired, low voice, the Divine One would ask why the barley-meal porridge or the cataplasms were not ready, or would complain about the arthralgia in his limbs,—and the spell would vanish.

On one occasion he was strolling with Julian beyond the city, at the sea-shore. It was a soft and pensive evening. In the distance, over the haven of Panormos, the projections and stairs of the temple of Artemis of Ephesus, adorned with sculptures, gleamed whitely. On the sandy shore of Caistre,—here, according to the legend, Latona had given birth to Artemis and Apollo,—the slender dark reeds did not stir. The smoke of the multitudinous sacrificial altars, from the sacred grove of Orthegia, rose up to heaven in straight columns. To the south could be seen the blue hills of Samos. The incoming tide was quiet, like the breathing of a sleeping babe; the transparent waves raced up on the smooth-rolled, black sand; there was the scent of the brine, warmed up by the rays of the day, and of sea grasses. The sinking sun had hid behind the clouds and gilt their masses. Iamblicus sat down on a stone,—Julian at his feet. The Master was stroking his coarse black hair.

"Art sad?"

"Ay."

"I know. Thou seekest and findest not. Thou hast not the strength to say: He is,—and hast not the courage to say: He is not."

"How hast thou surmised this, Master?"

"Poor lad! Why, 'tis now fifty years that I have been suffering with the same malaise. And I shall go on suffering unto death. For have I a greater knowledge of Him than thou hast? Or have I found Him? These be the

eternal tortures of childbirth. Before them all other tortures are naught. Men think that they endure suffering from hunger, from thirst, from pain, from poverty,—in reality they suffer from the thought that, possibly, He is non-existent. This is the sole sorrow of the universe. Who shall dare to say: '*He is not*,'—and who knows what fortitude one must have to say: '*He is*'?"

"And thou,—even thou,—hast never drawn nigh Him?"

"Thrice in my life have I felt the rapture,—a complete fusion with Him; Plotinus, four times, Porphyrius, five. I have had three moments in life, for which it had been worth the while living."

"I have been asking thy disciples about it; they know not. . . ."

"Why, do they dare to know? For them will suffice even the shell of wisdom,—the kernel is lethal almost to all."

"Let me die, then, Master,—give it me!"

"Wilt thou dare to take it?"

"Speak,—speak on!"

"What can I say? I can not. . . . And is it a good thing to speak of this? Hearken closely to the evening stillness: it speaks better than all words."

He stroked Julian's head as before, like a child's. The disciple thought: "There *It* is,—there is that which I awaited!" He embraced the knees of Iamblicus, and, raising his eyes up to him with supplication, uttered:

"Master, have pity! Reveal all to me. Forsake me not. . . ."

Iamblicus began speaking softly, to himself, as though neither hearing nor seeing him, his strangely immobile

green eyes directed at the clouds, gilt from within by the sun:

"Yea, yea. . . . We have all forgotten the Father's Voice. Like children, separated from the Father from the cradle, we hear, yet recognize Him not. It is necessary that all things become stilled in the soul, all celestial as well as all earthly voices. Then shall we hear him. . . . As long as reason shines, and, like the mid-day sun, illumines the soul, we remain within ourselves,—we behold not God. But when reason inclines toward setting, rapture descends upon the soul, even as the dew of the night. . . . The evil are not capable of feeling rapture; only the wise man becometh a lyre which is all a-quiver and resoundeth beneath the hand of God. Whence this light that illumines the soul? I know not. It cometh suddenly, when one doth not expect it; it can not be sought. God is not far from us. We must prepare ourselves; we must be calm and expectant, even as the eyes are expectant, waiting for the sun to arise,—to dart out, as the poet expresses it, out of dark Ocean. God neither cometh nor goeth away. He doth but appear. Behold,—there He stands! He is a negation of the world, of everything that is. He is naught,—He is all."

Iamblicus got up from the stone and slowly extended his emaciated arms.

"Peace, peace, say I,—peace! Do ye all attend unto Him. Behold, there He stands! And let the earth be still, and the sea, and the air,—aye, and the sky also. Attend! It is He who fills the Universe, who imbues the very atoms with His breath, who illuminates all matter, —He, Chaos, *an object of terror for the gods*,—even as the evening sun gilds the dark cloud. . . ."

Julian listened, and it seemed to him that the voice of

the Master, weak and low, was filling the universe, reaching to the very sky, to the last limits of the sea. But the sorrow of Julian was so great that it escaped his bosom as a groan:

"My father, forgive me,—but if that be so, what is the wherefore of life? Wherefore this eternal succession of birth and death? Wherefore suffering? Wherefore evil? Wherefore the flesh? Wherefore doubt? Wherefore the yearning after the impossible? . . ."

Iamblicus glanced up meekly and again passed his hand over Julian's hair:

"Therein lies the mystery, my son. There is no evil, there is no flesh, there is no universe,—if He exists. Either He, or the Universe. To us it seems that evil exists, that flesh exists, that the universe exists. 'Tis but a phantasm, the deception of life. Remember,—all have the one soul,—all mortals, and even the dumb creatures. All of us once reposed in the bosom of the Father on a time, in a light unwavering. But we did one day look down from the height upon dark, dead matter, and each beheld in it his own image, as within a mirror. And the soul said unto itself: 'I can, I would, be free. I—am even as He. Can it be that I shall not dare to fall away from Him and be all things?' The soul, even as Narcissus at the brook, was captivated by the beauty of its own image, reflected in the flesh. And it fell. It was fain to fall to the end, to become apart from God for all eternity, but it could not,—the feet of the mortal touch the earth; his brow is above the celestial mountains. And so, over the eternal ladder of birth and death, the souls of all creatures ascend and descend, toward Him and away from Him. They try to depart from the Father, and can not. Every soul would fain be itself God, but in vain: it sor-

rows after the Father's bosom; upon earth it hath no peace; it thirsteth to return to the Sole One. We must return to Him,—and then all shall be God, and God shall be in all.—For art thou the only one that yearneth after Him? Look thou, what a heavenly pensiveness there is in the silence of nature. Hearken closely: dost thou not feel that all things sorrow after Him? . . ."

The sun sank. The golden edges of the clouds, seemingly at white-heat, were dimming. The sea became wan and æthereal, like the sky; the sky,—deep and radiant, like the sea. A chariot whirled by on the highway. In it were a youth and a woman,—probably two enamoured of one another. The feminine voice struck up a pensive and familiar song of love. Then everything again fell silent and became still more pensive. The rapid night of the south was flying down from the heavens. Julian said in a whisper:

"How many times have I pondered,—why is there such pensiveness in nature? The more splendid it is, the more pensive. . . ."

Iamblicus replied with a smile:

"Yea, yea. . . . Look,—it is fain to utter the cause of its pensiveness,—and can not. 'Tis mute. It slumbers, and strives to recall God through a dream, but can not, burdened down by matter. It contemplates Him, dimly and slumbrously. All universes, all stars, and the sea, and the earth, and the beasts, and plants, and men,—all these be nature's dreams of God. That which it contemplates is born and dies. It creates through contemplation alone, as is the case in a dream; it creates with ease, knowing neither effort nor limitation. That is why her creations are so splendidly beautiful and so free, so aimless and so divine. The play of the dream-visions of nature are like

to the play of clouds. It hath no beginning nor end.—Save contemplation there is naught else in the universe. The more profound it is, the more quiet. Will, struggle, action,—are but a weakened, incompleted, or overcast contemplation of God. Nature, in its grand inactivity, creates forms, like to the geometer,—for whom only that exists which he sees; thus she, too, doth drop from her maternal bosom forms upon forms. But her wordless, dim contemplation is but an image of some other, radiant, thing. Nature seeketh after the word, and findeth it not. Nature is the slumbering mother Kybele, with eternally shut eye-lids; man only has found that word which she sought and found not: the soul of man is nature, with her slumbrous eye-lids opened,—awakened, and ready to behold God no longer in a dream, but in reality, face to face. . . ."

The first stars came out in the sky, grown dark and deep; now expiring entirely, now flaring up, as though they were revolving, like great jewels suspended from the firmament; one after another, ever new, they lit up in a warm glow, beyond computing. Iamblicus pointed to them.

"To what shall I liken the universe,—all these suns and stars?—To a net shall I liken them, cast into the sea. God shall encompass Creation, even as the water encompasseth the net; the net moveth, but hath not the power to stop the water; the universe longs to but cannot capture God. The net moveth, but God is calm, even as is the water into which the net is cast. Were the universe not to move, God would not create aught, would not come out of his calm, for whither and wherefore should he strive?—There, in the kingdom of the eternal Mothers, in the bosom of the Universal Soul, are secreted

the seeds, the Idea-Forms of all that is, and has been, and shall be; there is secreted the Logos-embryo both of the grasshopper, and of the blade of grass, and of an Olympian God. . . ."

Whereupon Julian exclaimed loudly, and his voice rang out in the stillness of the night like to an outcry of deathly pain:

"Who is He, then? Who is He? Why doth He not respond when we call? What is His name? I would fain know Him, hear Him, and see Him! Why doth He fly from my thought? Where is He?"

"My child, what does thought signify before Him? There is no name for Him: His nature is such that we can but say what He ought not to be,—but what He is, we know not. But then, canst thou suffer, and not praise Him? Canst thou love, and not praise Him?—The Creator of all, He Himself is naught of that which He hath created. When thou sayest: *He is not* thou art rendering unto Him no lesser praise than if thou wert to utter: *He is*. Of Him naught can be affirmed,—nor being, nor substance, nor life, inasmuch as He is above all being, above all substance, above all life. Therefore have I said that He is a negation of the universe, the negation of thy thought. Renounce the substantial, all that is,—and there, in the abyss of abysses, in the depth of an unutterable murk that is like to light, thou shalt find Him. Surrender to Him thy friends, and thy kindred, and thy fatherland, and the sky, and the earth, and thy own self, and thy reason. Thou shalt not see the light then,—thou wilt be light itself. Thou shalt not say then: He and I; thou shalt feel that He and thou are one. And thy soul shall laugh over thy own body, as over a phantasm. Then shall there be a silence; then there shall be no words.

And if the universe were at that moment to collapse, thou wouldst rejoice, inasmuch as what need wouldst thou have of the universe, when thou shalt remain with Him? Thy soul will have no desire, inasmuch as He hath no desire; it will not live, inasmuch as He hath no life; it will not think, inasmuch as He is above thought. Thought is the searching after light, whereas He seeketh not after light, inasmuch as He Himself is Light. He doth penetrate all the soul and doth transmute it into Himself. And then, dispassionate, solitary, it doth repose above reason, above virtue, above the realm of ideas,—above beauty,—in the abyss, in the bosom of the Father of Worlds and of Lights. The soul doth become God, or, to put it better, doth but recall, that through all the eternity of eternities it hath been and shall ever be God. Such, my son, is the life of the Olympians, such is the life of men pleasing to God and wise: a renunciation of all that is in the universe, a contempt of earthly passions, a fleeing of the soul to God, Whom it beholdeth face to face."

He fell silent, and Julian fell down at his feet, not daring to touch them, and kissed only the ground trod by the feet of the saint. Then the disciple did raise up his face and glanced up at the strange green eyes, within which shone the revealed mystery of the "ophidian" wisdom; they seemed calmer and profounder than the heavens,—as though a holy power were flowing out of them. Julian uttered in a whisper:

"Master, thou canst do all things. I have faith! Order the mountains to remove,—they shall remove. Be thou even as He! Work a miracle! Perform the impossible! Have mercy upon me! I have faith,—I have faith! . . ."

"My poor son, what is it that thou askest for? That

miracle which can be consummated within thy soul,—is it not greater than all the miracles which I can work? My child, what else save an awesome and a beneficent miracle is that might in whose name thou darest to say: 'He is, and e'en if He is not, it matters not,—*He shall be.*' And thou then sayest: 'May He be,—I will it thus!' "

VIII

When the master and the disciple, returning from their stroll, were passing through Panormos, the populous haven of Ephesus, they noted an unusual commotion. Great numbers were running through the streets, flourishing flaming torches of pitch and crying:

"The Christians are demolishing our temples! Woe is us!"

Others were yelling:

"Death to the Olympian gods! Astarte is vanquished by Christ!"

Iamblicus was thinking of passing through the deserted lanes. But the running throng drew them along over the wharf of Caistre, past the idol-temple of Artemis of Ephesus. The magnificent temple, the creation of Dynocrates, stood like a stronghold,—austere, dark and firm-bedded, silhouetted sharply against the starry sky. The reflection of the torches quivered upon its gigantean pillars with their little caryatids in lieu of pediments. Not the Roman Empire alone, but all other nations as well, venerated this holy place.

Some one in the crowd cried out in an uncertain voice:

"Great is Artemis of Ephesus!"

Hundreds of voices made answer to him:

"Death to the Olympian gods and to thy Artemis!"

Over the black edifice of the city arsenal there rose up the sanguinary glow of a conflagration. Julian glanced at his divine Master,—and found him beyond recogni-

tion. Iamblicus had once more become transformed into a timid, ailing old man. He was complaining of headache, expressing fears that his arthralgia would begin in the night, that the maid servant had forgot to prepare his epithems. Julian gave his upper cloak to the master, but the latter still felt cold. With an expression of physical suffering on his face he stopped up his ears not to hear the shouts and loud laughter of the street. More than aught else in the universe did Iamblicus dread the mob; he would say that there was no fiend more stupid and repulsive than the spirit of the people. He was now pointing out to his disciple the faces of the people running past:

"Behold,—what hideousness, what vulgarity, and what assurance of their being in the right! Is it not an ignominious thing to be a man,—the same flesh, the same filth, as these? . . ."

A little Christian crone was lamenting, in a sing-song voice:

"And so my little ailing grandson, he says to me: 'Cook me some meat broth, gammer'—'So be it,' says I, 'my dear; there, I will go to the market and bring back some meat.'—Thinks I to myself: meat, like as not, is now cheaper than wheaten bread. I bought five oboli's worth and cooked the broth. But our neighbour in the same court yells out: 'What art thou cooking?—or knowest thou not that the meat in the market now is unclean?' 'Unclean? How?' says I. 'What meanest thou?' 'Why,' says she, 'in order to mock good Christians the priests of the goddess Demetris in the night sprinkled all the mart, all the meat shops, with sacrificial water. None in the city eats this unclean meat. That is why the priests of the idols are being stoned, while the fiend's idol-temple

of Demetris shall be demolished.'—So I ups and throws the broth out to the dog. 'Tis naught to jest about,—all of five oboli! 'Tis not to be earned in a whole day. But still, I did not make my little grandson unclean."

Others imparted how, the year before, a certain miserly Christian had eaten his fill of sacrificial meat, and that all his inwards had rotted, and that there had been such stench in his house that all his kindred had run away.

They arrived at the square. Here was a small temple of Demetris-Isis-Astarte—the Three-Visaged Hecate, the esoteric goddess of the fecundity of the earth, the mighty and much-loving Kybele, the Mother of the Gods. The monks had clustered about the temple on all sides, like large black flies about a piece of honeycomb; monks crawled over the white projections, monks clambered up ladders with chanting of holy psalms, monks smashed the sculptures. The pillars shook; the chips of the delicate white marble flew,—it seemed to suffer like a living body. Attempts were made to set the edifice on fire, but this was found impossible,—the temple was entirely of marble.

Suddenly there resounded within a deafening, and, at the same time, a canorous ringing. The triumphant outcry of the people went up to heaven:

"Ropes! Ropes! By the hands, by the feet!"

With a chanting of prayers and glad, loud laughter, from the doors of the temple the crowd, with ropes, drew down the steps the ringing, silvern, pallid body of the goddess, the Mother of the Gods,—a creation of Scopas.

"Into the fire! Into the fire!"

And they dragged her along the dirty square.

A monk-theologian was declaiming a fragment from a recent decree of Emperor Constantine, brother of Constantius:

"*Cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania.* May superstition cease, and may the insanity of the bringing of sacrifices cease."

"Fear naught! Break, pillage everything in the fiend's idol-temple!"

Another monk, in the light of the torches, read out of a parchment scroll an excerpt from the book of Firmicus Maternus: *De errore profanarum religionum: Of the errors of the Profane in matters of religion:*

"Sacred Emperors! Come ye to the aid of the miserable pagans. Better is it to save them by force than to allow them to perish. Tear down the ornaments from their temples,—let their treasures enrich our treasury. Let him that bringeth a sacrifice to the idols be torn out by the roots from the earth. Kill him, stone him, even though it be thy son, thy brother, the spouse that sleepeth on thy bosom."

A shout swept over the throng:

"Death, death to the Olympian gods!"

An enormous monk with dishevelled black hair that stuck to his sweating brow, had heaved a copper axe over the goddess and was choosing a spot to strike. Some one volunteered the advice:

"In her belly,—her shameless belly!"

The silvern body, maimed and shapeless, was denting. The blows rang out, leaving weals on the belly of Demetris the Nourisher, the Mother of Gods and of Men. An old pagan covered his face with his raiment not to behold the sacrilege; he wept, and reflected that now everything was at an end,—the universe was perished:

Earth-Demetris would not want to bear ears of grain for men.

An eremite, who had come from the deserts of Mesopotamia, in a sheep-skin, bearing a staff, and a hollowed-out gourd in lieu of a vessel, in crude sandals shod with iron nails, ran up to the goddess.

"For forty years have I gone without washing, that I might not behold my own nakedness and be tempted therewith. But the moment one comes to the city, brethren, then all one sees everywhere are the naked bodies of the accursed gods. Are we to endure much longer the temptation of the fiend? These vile idols be everywhere,—in the houses, on the streets, on roofs, in the baths, under one's feet, over one's head!" He spat twice. "One cannot spit enough! . . ."

And with hatred the old man smote the breast of Kybele with his sandal. He was stamping upon this naked breast, and it seemed to him alive; he was fain to crush it under the sharp nails of his sandals. He was whispering, suffocating from malice:

"Take that, take that,—thou abominable, thou naked one! Take that, thou bitch! . . ."

Under his foot the lips of the goddess retained their wonted, soft smile.

The mob raised her up in their arms, to throw her into the bonfire. A drunken artisan, whose breath reeked of garlic, spat right in her face. The bonfire was enormous, —the wooden market-stalls, defiled with the sacrificial water, had gone into the piling of it. High above the mob the calm stars flickered through the smoke.

The goddess was thrown into the fire, in order to smelt her silvern body. And again, with a tender, canorous ringing, she struck against the burning brands.

"There'll be an ingot of five talents or so. Thirty thousand small silver coins. Half we shall send off to the Emperor for soldier-hire; the other half, for the starving. Kybele shall, at the least, bring some benefit to the poor. Out of the goddess,—thirty thousand coins for soldiers and for beggars."

"Wood! Wood!"

The flame flared up more brightly, and put all in a merry mood.

"We shall see if a fiend flies out. They do say there is one fiend to every idol, and when it comes to goddesses, —they go by twos and even threes. . . ."

"When it starts to melt, 'twill grow too hot for the Cunning One,—so he'll up and pop out of her vile mouth, in the guise of a bloody or a fiery serpent. . . ."

"Nay, they should have made the sign of the cross over her first, or else, like as not, he can e'en glide away into the ground in the form of an adder. Year before last they were wrecking the idol-temple of Aphrodite; and some one up and splashes holy water around. And what d'you think? Out from under her garments there jumped tiny mites of imps. Of course! Saw it my own self. Evil-smelling, black, with white folds, now, and shaggy. And they set up a squeaking, like mice. And no sooner had they knocked the head off of Aphrodite, than out of her head there jumped the chief one of them all, with horns *that* long, while his tail was all stagey, bare, without any hair like that of a mangy cur. . . ."

Some one remarked mistrustfully:

"I do not dispute it. Ye may e'en have happed to see the fiends, but when, the other day, they were breaking up in Gaza the idol of Zeus, never a fiend was there inside, but such abominable filth that it is a shame to

speak of it. To look at him, he is high and mighty, and awesome: all ivory, gold, with thunderbolts in his hands. But inside,—all cobwebs, rats, dust, rusty cross beams, levers, nails, stinking pitch and the devil knows what other rubbish. There be the gods for you!"

Iamblicus, as white as linen, with eyes out of which the fire had gone, took Julian by the hand and led him to one side.

"Look,—dost see those two? They are the informers of Constantius. Thy brother Gallus has already been carried off to Constantinople under guard. Take heed! This very day they will lodge information. . . ."

"What is to be done, Master? I am inured to it. I know, —they have long been watching me. . . ."

"Long? . . . Wherefore, then, hast thou not told me?"

And his hand shook in the hand of Julian.

"What are they whispering about? Look ye,—are these not infidels, perchance? Ho, there, little dotard, bestir thyself,—fetch wood!" a tatterdemalion, feeling himself victor, began yelling at them.

Iamblicus whispered to Julian:

"Let us despise and submit. Is it not all the same? The stupidity of man cannot offend the gods."

The Divine One took a log from the hands of a Christian, and cast it into the fire. Julian could not believe his eyes. But the informers were contemplating him, with smiles, searchingly and intently. Thereupon faintheartedness, the habit of hypocrisy, contempt of himself and of men, and a malicious joy, possessed the soul of Julian. Sensing behind his back the gaze of the informers, he walked up to a faggot of firewood, picked out the biggest brand, and, following Iamblicus, cast

it into the bonfire, in which the body of the mutilated goddess was already melting. He saw the molten silver coursing in little streams down her face, like to drops of pre-mortal sweat, while upon her lips, as before, there was an unconquerable, calm smile.

IX

"Look at those men in black garments, Julian. These be the shadows of nightfall, the shadows of death. Soon there shall not be a single white garment, not a single piece of marble illumined by the sun. 'Tis the end!"

Thus spake the young sophist Antoninus, son of the Egyptian prophetess Sosipatra and the Neo-Platonist Ædesius. He was standing with Julian on a large, elevated square before the Sacrificial Altar of Pergamos, flooded by the sun, surrounded by the blue sky. On the pediment of the temple was sculptured a Gigantomachy, —a combat of Titans and gods: the gods were triumphing; the hooves of their winged steeds were trampling upon the reptilian legs of the Titans.

Antoninus pointed out the sculptures to Julian.

"The Olympians vanquished the ancient gods; now the new gods will vanquish the Olympians. Their temples shall be sepulchres. . . ."

Antoninus was a well-built youth; certain lines of his body and face recalled the Pythian Apollo; but already for many years he had been suffering from an incurable complaint,—and it was a strange thing to see this purely Hellenic, splendidly beautiful face yellow, emaciated, with an expression of ennui,—the new disease, foreign to the faces of ancient heroes.

"For one thing alone do I supplicate the gods," continued Antoninus, "that I may not behold this barbarian night, that I may die before it fall. Rhetoricians, sophists,

scholars, poets, artists, lovers of Hellenic wisdom,—we are all superfluous. We are late comers. 'Tis the end!"

"But what if it be not the end?" uttered Julian quietly, as if to himself.

"Nay, 'tis the end! We are ailing, we are too weak. . . ."

The face of the twenty-year-old Julian seemed almost as haggard and pale as the face of Antoninus; the protruding lower lip gave him an expression of morose aloofness; his thick eyebrows frowned with an angry obstinacy; about the homely, excessively large nose, premature wrinkles were appearing; his eyes glittered with a dry, febrile sparkle. He was clad as a Christian novice. In the daytime, as before, he frequented churches, the sepulchres of martyrs; he read the Scripture from the ambo, and was preparing for the tonsure of a monk. At times hypocrisy appeared to him vain,—he knew what fate had overtaken Gallus; knew that his brother was not to escape death. And he himself, month after month, lived in constant expectancy of death.

His nights he passed in the book ambry of Pergamos, where he was studying the works of the celebrated enemy of the Christians, the rhetorician Libanius; he attended the courses of the Greek sophists,—Ædesius of Pergamos, Chrisanthius of Sardis, Priscius of Thesephros, Eusebius of Myndus, Priœresius, Nymphidian. They told him that of which he had already heard from Iamblicus: of the triad of the Neo-Platonists, of sacred ecstasy.

"Nay, all this is not it," pondered Julian; "the chief thing they keep hid from me."

Priscius, who emulated Pythagoras, had passed five years in silence; he ate naught that partook of life; he

used neither woolen stuff, nor sandals of leather; the stuff of his raiment was of vegetable origin, as was also his food; he wore the Pythagorean chlamys of pure white linen, and sandals made of palm fronds. "In our age," he was wont to say, "the most important thing is to be able to keep silent, and to ponder upon how we may perish with dignity." And Priscius, with dignity, despising all, awaited that which he deemed perdition,—the victory of the Christians over the Hellenes.

The crafty and cautious Chrisanthius, when the conversation veered upon the gods, would raise his eyes up to heaven, asserting that he durst not speak of them, since he knew naught,—and as for that which he had known before, he had forgot it, and advised others to forget; concerning magic, concerning miracles, concerning visions, he would not even want to hear, affirming that all these were deceptions, interdicted by the laws of the Roman Empire.

Julian ate poorly, and slept but little; his blood seethed with a vehement impatience. Every morn, upon awakening, he would ask: "Is it to be to-day, perchance?"

He had become a bore to the poor, affrightened theurgists-philosophers with his interrogations anent mysteries, anent miracles. Some laughed at him,—especially Chrisanthius; he had a crafty, volpine, scoffing smile, and a habit of concurring with those opinions which he deemed the greatest of absurdities.

On one occasion Ædesius, an ancient of intelligence, timorous and kindly, having taken compassion upon Julian, said to him:

"My child, I would fain die in peace! Thou art yet young. Leave me; go to my disciples; they shall reveal all to thee. Yea, there is much of which we are afraid to

speak. . . . When thou shalt be initiated into the mysteries, then, perchance, thou shalt become ashamed that thou wert born *merely a man,* that, until this time, thou hast remained only such."

Eusebius of Myndus was a man jaundiced and envious.

"There are no longer any miracles," he announced to Julian. "And do not thou await them. Men have grown wearisome to the gods. Magic is but nonsense. Foolish are they that have faith in it. But, if wisdom has become dreary to thee, and thou wouldst, without fail, be deceived, betake thee to Maximus. He despiseth our dialectics, while he himself . . . However, I like not to speak ill of friends. Better hearken to what happened recently in a certain subterranean temple of Hecate, whither Maximus had brought us to demonstrate his art. When we had entered and offered up a prayer to the goddess, he said: 'Sit ye down,—ye shall behold a miracle.' We sat down. He cast upon the altar a grain of incense, muttering something the while,—probably a spell. And we all plainly beheld the statue of Hecate smile. Maximus said: 'Fear not,—ye shall now see both lamps in the hands of the goddess light up. Behold!' He had hardly finished when the lamps lit up."

"A miracle had been consummated!" exclaimed Julian.

"Yea, yea. We were in such amaze that we fell on our faces. But when I had walked out of the temple, I reflected: 'What is this, then? Is that which Maximus is doing worthy of wisdom?' Peruse books,—peruse Pythagoras, Plato, Porphyry,—that is where thou shalt find wisdom. Is not the purification of the heart by divine dialectics more splendidly beautiful than any miracles?"

Julian was no longer listening. He looked up with

burning eyes at the pale, jaundiced face of Eusebius, and said, as he left the school:

"Remain ye with your books and dialectics. I would fain have life and faith. And can there be any faith without a miracle? I thank thee, Eusebius. Thou hast shown me a man whom I have long been seeking."

The sophist glanced up with a venomous smile and threw after him the utterance:

"Well, nephew of Constantine, thou hast not gone far from thy uncle.—For Socrates to have faith it was not necessary to have miracles."

X

Exactly at midnight, in the portico of the great Hall of Mysteries, Julian laid down his raiment of a novice, and the mystagogues—the priests who were the initiators into the mysteries—enveloped him in the chiton of the hierophants, made from the fibres of pure Ægyptian papyrus; a palm branch was given him in his hands; his feet remained bare. He entered the low, long hall.

A double row of columns of oreichalkos—greenish copper—supported the vaults; each column represented two intertwined serpents; the oreichalkos gave off an odour of copper. Near the columns stood thuribles upon slender, high legs; their fiery tongues fluttered, and swirls of white smoke filled the hall. At the farther end two golden-winged Assyrian bulls glimmered faintly; they supported a magnificent throne; upon it sat in state, like to a god, the Grand Hierophant himself, Maximus of Ephesus, in a long, dark garment woven with gold, flooded with cascades of smaragds and carbuncles.

The drawn-out voice of a hierodule proclaimed the beginning of the mysteries.

"If there be in this gathering any infidel, or a Christian, or an Epicurean,—let him go forth!"

Julian had been forewarned of the answers to be made by the one undergoing initiation. He spake:

"Christians,—let them go forth!"

The chorus of hieroduli, hidden in the gloom, caught up in a dismal chant:

"The portals! The portals! Let the Christians go forth! Let the infidels go forth!"

Then there stepped out of the gloom four and twenty youths; they were nude; in the hands of each glistened a silvern, semi-circular *sistrum,* resembling the sickle of a new moon, save that the sharp ends of the sickle were joined into a full circumference, and within them were inset thin spokes, that quivered from the least touch. The youths, all in unison, elevating the sistra above their heads, struck with a uniform motion of their fingers these transversal little bars,—and the sistra rang out, plaintively, languorously.

Maximus made a sign. Some one drew near Julian from the back, and, having bandaged his eyes tightly with a kerchief, uttered:

"Go! Fear nor water, nor fire, nor spirit, nor flesh, nor life, nor death!"

He was led off. With a creaking of iron a door opened, —probably it was rusted; he was allowed to enter it; pent-up air was wafted in his face; under his feet were slippery, steep stairs. He began descending the endless staircase. There was a stillness of death, and an odour of dankness. It seemed to him that he was deep underground.

The staircase came to an end. Now he was going through a narrow passage. He could feel the wall with his hands.

Suddenly his bare feet felt the dampness; small rills began to murmur; the water covered his feet. He continued walking With every step the level of the water rose, reaching his shanks, then his knees, finally his hips.

His teeth chattered from the cold. He continued walking. The water rose up to his breast. The thought came to him: "Perhaps this is but a trap,—may not Maximus want to put me to death, to please Constantius?" But he kept on walking.

The water decreased.

Suddenly heat, as if out of a forge, was wafted in his face; the earth began scorching his feet; it seemed to him that he was approaching a furnace at red heat; the blood pounded in his temples; at times the heat was as great as if a torch, or molten iron, were being brought close to his face. He kept on walking.

The heat decreased.

But his breath contracted from a heavy, foul odour; he stumbled against something round,—then again and again; he surmised from the odour that these were dead men's skulls and bones. It appeared to him that some one was walking beside him,—noiselessly, gliding like a shade. A cold hand seized his hand. He cried out. Whereupon *two* hands fell to clutching him stealthily, catching at his clothes. He noted that the dry skin upon them was scaling off, and that their bare bones protruded. In the way these hands were catching at his clothes there was a playful and repulsive tenderness, like that of depraved women. Julian felt a breath upon his cheek,—in it was an odour of putrefaction and the dankness of the grave. And suddenly, at his very ear, there came a rapid, rapid whispering, like to the susurration of autumn leaves at midnight:

" 'Tis I, 'tis I,—I, I. For dost thou not recognise me? 'Tis I."

"Who art thou?" he uttered,—and remembered that he had broken the vow of silence.

"I, I. Wouldst have me take the bandage off thy eyes,—and thou shalt come to know all, thou shalt behold me? . . ."

Bony fingers, with the same vile, gleeful hastiness, busied themselves, crawlingly, upon his face, to take off his blindfold. The chill of death penetrated to the depths of his heart, and involuntarily, with a habitual gesture, he made the sign of the cross thrice, as he used to do in his childhood whenever he had seen a fearful dream.

A thunder peal burst forth,—the earth beneath his feet quaked; he felt himself falling—whither he knew not,—and lost consciousness.

When Julian came to, the blindfold was no longer over his eyes; he was lying on soft pillows in an enormous, faintly lit cavern; a cloth saturated with strong scents was given him to smell. Opposite Julian's couch stood a naked, emaciated man with a dark-brown skin,—a Hindu gymnosophist, an assistant to Maximus. He was holding motionlessly above his head a shining disc of copper. Some one spake to Julian:

"Behold!"

And he centred his eyes upon this disc, flashing blindingly, painfully. He gazed for a long spell. The outlines of the object blended in a mist. He was experiencing a pleasant, soothing lassitude of body; it seemed to him that the copper disc was now shining no longer exteriorly, but within him; his eye-lids were drooping, and upon his lips wandered a tired, submissive smile; he was surrendering himself to the spell of the light. Some one passed a hand over his head several times and asked:

"Art thou sleeping?"

"Yea."

"Look into my eyes."

Julian with an effort lifted up his eyelids, and beheld Maximus bending over him. He was an ancient of seventy years; his beard, as white as snow, fell down almost to his waist; his hair, reaching to his shoulder, showed a light aureate shade through the grey; on his cheeks and forehead deep wrinkles showed blackly, fraught not with suffering, but with wisdom and will; over his thin lips glided an equivocal smile,—such a smile as is found in very intelligent, false, and captivating women; but most of all to Julian's liking were the eyes of Maximus,—under grey, beetling eyebrows, small, sparkling, quick-darting, they were penetrating, mocking, and caressing. The Hierophant queried:

"Wouldst behold an ancient Titan?"

"I would," answered Julian.

"Look, then."

And the enchanter pointed to the farther recess of the cavern, where stood a tripod of oreichalkos. From it arose in an immense, swirling mass a cloud of white smoke. There resounded a voice, like to the voice of a storm,—and the entire cavern quaked:

"Heracles, Heracles,—set me free!"

A blue sky flashed out between rent clouds. Julian, reclining with an immobile, pale face, and lids half shut, looked at the fleeting, light images darting past before him, and it seemed to him that it was not he himself who was beholding them, but that some other being was commanding him to behold them.

He had a dream of clouds, of snowy mountains; somewhere below, probably in an abyss, was the surge of the sea. He beheld an enormous body; the legs and arms were chained by hoops to a crag; a vulture was pecking

at the liver of the Titan; drops of black blood coursed down his hips; the chains clanged; he darted about in his pain:

"Set me free, Heracles!"

And the Titan lifted up his head; his eyes met the eyes of Julian.

"Who art thou? Whom art thou calling?" questioned Julian with a profound effort, like a man speaking in his sleep.

"Thee."

"I am but a weak mortal."

"Thou art my brother; set me free."

"Who has chained thee up anew?"

"The poor in spirit, the meek ones, they who forgive their enemies out of cowardice,—slaves, all slaves! Set me free!"

"Wherewithal can I—"

"Be even as I."

The clouds darkened, swirling; the thunder set up a rumbling in the distance; lightnings flashed forth; the vulture soared up with an outcry, drops of blood dripping from his beak. But mightier than the thunder sounded the voice of the Titan:

"Set me free, Heracles!"

Then everything was covered up with the clouds of smoke, arising from the tripod. Julian awoke for an instant. The Hierophant asked:

"Wouldst behold the Outcast?"

"I would."

"Behold!"

Julian again half shut his eyes and gave himself up to the light enchantment of dreaming. In the white smoke appeared faint outlines of a head and two gigantean

wings; the feathers hung drooping, like the branches of the weeping willow, and a bluish light quivered upon them. Some one called him in a distant, faint voice, like some friend who had died:

"Julian! Julian! Abjure Christ in my name . . ."

Julian kept silent. Maximus whispered in his ear: "If thou wouldst behold the Great Angel,—abjure." Thereupon Julian uttered:

"I abjure."

Above the head of the vision, through the mist, flashed out the Morning Star, the Star of Aurora. And the Angel repeated:

"Julian, abjure Christ in my name."

"I abjure."

And a third time spake the angel, now in a loud voice, near and triumphant:

"Abjure!"

And a third time did Julian repeat:

"I abjure."

And the angel said:

"Come to me."

"Who art thou?"

"I am the Lightbearer. I am Eos. I am the Morning Star."

"How beautiful thou art!"

"Be thou like to me."

"What sorrow there is in thine eyes!"

"I suffer for all that live. There is no need of birth, there is no need of death. Come ye all to me. I am the shade, I am rest, I am freedom."

"What do men call thee?"

"Evil."

"Thou—Evil!"

"I did revolt."

"Against whom?"

"Against Him Whose equal I am. He would fain have been alone, but we be twain."

"Let me be even as thou art."

"Revolt, like me. I shall give thee strength."

The Angel vanished. A whirlwind swirling up made the flame of the tripod waver; the flame bent towards the ground, spreading along it. Then the tripod was overturned by the whirlwind, and the flame expired. In the gloom was heard trampling, squealing, groaning, as though an unseen countless horde, fleeing from the foe, were flying through the air. Julian, in the grasp of terror, fell with his face to the ground, and the long, dark raiment of the Hierophant beat above him in the wind. "Flee, flee!" vociferated innumerable voices.—"The gates of Hell are yawning. 'Tis He, 'tis He, 'tis He,—the Conqueror!"

The wind whistled in Julian's ears. And legion after legion rushed over him. Suddenly, after a subterranean shock, silence reigned anew,—and a breath as of heaven swept through it, such as may come in the middle of a short summer night. Thereupon some voice pronounced:

"Saul! Saul! Wherefore dost thou persecute me?"

To Julian it seemed that he had already heard this voice at some time in his long-forgot childhood. Then again, but softer, as though from afar:

"Saul! Saul! Wherefore dost thou persecute me?"

And the voice died away at such a distance, that it floated by in a barely audible breath:

"Saul! Saul! Wherefore dost thou persecute me?"

When Julian, upon coming to, raised his face from

the ground, he beheld one of the hieroduli lighting a lamp. His head was spinning; but he remembered all that he had gone through, as one remembers visions seen in dreams. His eyes were bandaged anew and he was given spiced wine to taste of. He felt strength and vigour in his limbs. He was led upward, up the staircase. Now his arm was in the arm of Maximus. To Julian it seemed that an invisible power was buoying him up, as if on wings. The Hierophant said:

"Thou mayst put questions."

"Didst thou summon Him?" uttered Julian.

"Nay. But when one string of a lyre quivers, another will respond to it, opposite answers to opposite."

"Wherefore, then, is there such might in His words, if they be falsehood?"

"They are truth."

"What sayest thou? Then the words of the Titan and the Angel are falsehood?"

"They, too, are the truth."

"Twain truths?"

"Twain."

"Thou temptest me. . . ."

"Neither myself nor the complete truth is tempting or extraordinary. If thou fearest,—keep silent."

"I fear not. Tell all. Are the Galileans right?"

"Yea."

"Wherefore, then, did I make the renunciation?"

"There is also another truth."

"A higher?"

"Nay. The equal of that which thou didst renounce."

"But what is one to believe in? Is there God?"

"Both there and here. Serve Ahriman, serve Ormuzd, —as thou wilt; but remember: both are equal; the

Kingdom of the Devil is equal to the Kingdom of God."

"Whither is one to go?"

"Choose one of the two paths,—and halt not."

"Which?"

"If thou dost believe in Him,—take up the Cross, follow Him, as he hath ordained. Be poor in spirit, be chaste, be a lamb without voice in the hands of executioners; flee to a desert; give up thy flesh and thy spirit to Him; suffer, believe. This is one of the two paths: the great martyrs among the Galileans attain the same freedom as Prometheus and Lucifer."

"I do not want it!"

"Then choose thou the other path: be strong and free; pity not, love not, forgive not; revolt and vanquish all things; believe not, and come to know all things. And the universe shall be thine, and thou shalt be even as the Titan and the Angel of the Morning Star."

"I can not forget that in the words of the Galilean there is also truth; I can not endure two truths! . . ."

"If thou canst not,—thou shalt be even as all mortals. 'Tis better to perish. But thou canst. Dare. Thou shalt be Cæsar."

"I,—Cæsar?"

"Thou shalt have under thy sway that which not even the hero of Macedonia had."

Julian felt that they were coming out of the subterrane; a fresh sea wind,—probably the morning wind,—was blowing upon them; without seeing, he surmised about him the infinitude of sea and sky.

The Hierophant took the bandage off his eyes. They were standing on a lofty tower of marble,—an astronomical tower, modelled after the ancient Chaldæan towers, built upon an enormous sheer cliff over the very

sea; below lay the magnificent gardens and villas of Maximus,—palaces, propylæ, reminiscent of the colonnades of Persepolis; farther on, in a mist, were Artemision and many-columned Ephesus; still farther, in the east, were mountains; there the sun was about to rise; to the south, to the west, to the north spread the sea, unencompassable, misty, dark blue, all a-quiver, all laughter, in expectation of the sun. They were standing on such a height that Julian's head had turned dizzy; he had to lean on the arm of Maximus.

Suddenly the rising sun flashed out from behind the mountains; he puckered up his eyes with a smile,—and the sun touched the white sacramental raiment of Julian with its first ray,—at first a pale rose, then red, sanguine.

The Hierophant took in the horizon with a gesture of his arm, indicating the sea and the land:

"Behold,—all this is thine."

"Why, have I the power, Master? . . . I await death every day. I am weak and ailing . . ."

"The Sun, the God Mithra, crowneth thee with his purple. 'Tis the purple of Cæsar. All is thine. Dare!"

"What need have I of all, if there be not one sole truth,—if there be not God, whom I seek?"

"Find Him. Make one, if thou canst, of the truth of the Titan and the truth of the Galilean,—and thou shalt be the greatest of all that are born of women on earth."

. . . . . .

Maximus of Ephesus had enormous book-ambries,—quiet marble chambers, equipped with scientific appliances and spacious anatomical theatres.

In one of these the young savant Oribasius, a leech of the Alexandrean school, holding a fine steel scalpel in

his hands, was performing together with the theurgist a dissection of a rare animal, sent to Maximus from India. The hall was circular, windowless, with a light coming down from above, built after the style of just such halls in the Museum of Alexandrea; all around it stood copper vessels, braziers, mathematical instruments of Ælopilos and Archimedes, the so-called *Fire Machine* of Ktesibius; in the stillness of an adjacent book-ambry the drops of a clepsydra, the invention of Appolonius, were falling with a ringing plash; everywhere one saw terrestrial globes, geographical charts on copper, and graphic models of the astral spheres by Hipparchus and Eratosthenes. The friends were performing a vivisection, according to the method of the great anatomist Hierophilus. Under the even light, falling from the round aperture in the roof, Maximus, in the simple garb of a philosopher, looked with curiosity at the still warm viscera of the animal, lying on the broad marble table. His small and quick-darting eyes, from underneath their grey brows, sparkled with their habitual penetrating and mocking glitter. Oribasius was saying, bending over the table, and inspecting the just extracted liver:

"How can Maximus, the philosopher, believe in miracles?"

"I both believe and do not believe," answered the theurgist. "Can nature, which we are investigating, be aught save the most miraculous of miracles? These fine blood vessels, these nerves, this perfect structure of the inner organs, which we are scrutinizing like augurs,—are they not a miracle and a mystery?"

"Thou knowest whereof I speak," retorted Oribasius. "Wherefore dost thou deceive this poor lad?"

"Julian?"

"Yea."

"He himself is fain to be deceived."

The obdurate slender eyebrows of the young physician contracted:

"Master, if thou hast any love for me, tell me who thou art? How canst thou endure this falsehood? For do I not know what magic is? All of you attach to the ceiling phosphorescent fish scales,—and the disciple, undergoing initiation into the mysteries, believes that it is the starry sky, descending to him at the word of the Hierophant; you fashion out of leather and wax a death's-head, attach below it the neck of a crane, and, concealed in a space beneath the floor, utter into this bony pipe your prophecies,—the disciple thinks that the skull is proclaiming to him the mysteries of death; and, when it is necessary for the death's-head to disappear, you do draw near it a brazier with coals,—the wax melts, and the skull falls apart; out of a lanthorn you project reflections through coloured lenses upon the white smoke of aromatic substances,—and the disciple imagines that the apparent visions before him are those of gods; through a cistern that hath a stone rim and a bottom of glass, you do show him the living Apollo,—a disguised slave, or the living Aphrodite,—a disguised strumpet. And all this you style Holy Mysteries! . . ."

Upon the thin lips of the Hierophant appeared an equivocal smile:

"Our mysteries be more profound and beautiful than thou dost think, Oribasius. Rapture is necessary to man. For him that hath faith, the strumpet is veritably Aphrodite, and the fish scales are veritably the starry sky. Thou sayest that men pray and weep for visions, born of an oil lamp with painted lenses. Oribasius,

Oribasius,—but is not nature, before which thy wisdom is amazed,—is it not just such a phantom, evoked by emotions which are deceptive, even as the lanthorn of the Persian magus? Wherein is truth? Wherein the falsehood? Thou believest and knowest,—I do not want to believe, I can not know. . . ."

"Can it be that Julian would be grateful to thee, if he knew that thou deceivest him?"

"Julian saw that which he desired and had to see. I gave him rapture; I gave him faith and the strength to live. Thou sayest I deceived him? Had it been necessary, I, perchance, might have even deceived him, and tempted him as well. I love him. I shall not forsake him unto death. I shall make him great and free."

And Maximus glanced at Oribasius with his impenetrable eyes.

A sunbeam fell upon the grey beard and the grey beetling eyebrows of the old man; they took on a sheen, like silver; the wrinkles upon his brow became still deeper and darker, while over his thin lips flitted the equivocal smile,—captivating, like the smiles of women.

XI

JULIAN paid a visit to his unfortunate brother Gallus, when the latter, in passing, stopped in Constantinople. He found him surrounded by a traitorous guard of the dignitaries of Constantius; here was the crafty, urbane court dandy, the quæstor Leontius, who had gained fame through his ability in eavesdropping at doors, in interrogating slaves; and the tribune of the shield-bearers, the *scutarii,* the taciturn barbarian Bainobaudes, who had the appearance of a headsman in disguise; and the pompous master of ceremonies to the Emperor, the *comes domesticorum,* Lucillian; and, finally, that same Scúdilo, who had at one time been a military tribune of Cappadocian Cæsarea, and now, thanks to the patronage of old women, had gotten a place at court.

Gallus, hale, merry and frivolous, as always, regaled Julian with a most excellent supper; especially did he boast of a fat Chalcidian pheasant stuffed with fresh dates from Thebes. He laughed like a child, and recalled Macellum. Suddenly Julian incautiously asked his brother, in conversation, about his wife, Constantina. The face of Gallus changed; he let drop his fingers, holding a white, succulent piece of pheasant, which he was bringing to his mouth; his eyes filled with tears.

"Why, dost thou not know, Julian? On her way to the Emperor—she had gone to him to exonerate me—Constantina died from fever in Sena in Gallia, in the

little town of Bithynia. I cried two nights through when I came to know of her death. . . ."

He glanced back uneasily at the door, bent towards Julian, and uttered in his ear:

"From that day on I have let everything go. . . . She alone would have been able to save me yet. Brother, she was an amazing woman! Nay, thou knowest not, Julian, what a woman she was! Without her I am done for. . . . I can do naught,—naught can I understand,—my hands lie idle. They do with me as they list. . . ."

He drained at a single gulp a goblet of undiluted wine.

Julian recalled Constantina,—a widow, no longer young, a sister of Constantius,—she had been the evil genius of his brother; recalled the countless stupid crimes which she was wont to make him commit,—sometimes because of some valuable bauble, because of a promised necklace; and he asked, desiring to find out what sway subdued him to this woman:

"Was she handsome?"

"Why, hast thou never seen her?—Nay, far from handsome,—even decidedly not handsome. Swarthy, pock-fretten, small of stature; she had bad teeth,—however, she avoided smiling. 'Twas said she was untrue to me,—of nights, 'twould seem, disguised, she would, like Messalina, run to the stable of the hippodrome to the young hostlers. But what affair was that of mine? Was I not untrue to her? She did not interfere with my life, and I did not interfere with hers. They say she was cruel. Yea, she knew how to rule, Julian. She did not like the perpetrators of street squibs, in which they used, the nasty knaves, to reproach her with her bad upbringing, comparing her with a slave scullion-wench togged out in fine clothes. She knew how to avenge. But what a

mind, Julian,—what a mind! I felt as much at peace behind her as behind a wall of stone. Ah, well, but we did have our sweet fill of skylarking and merrymaking, for all that! . . ."

Smiling from pleasant recollections, he most daintily passed the tip of his tongue over his lips, still wet with the wine.

"Yea, I may say it,—we have skylarked!" he concluded, not without pride.

Julian, when he had been going to keep the appointment, had thought to awaken repentance in his brother, had been preparing in his mind a discourse, on the style of Libanius,—anent the virtues and dignities of citizenship. He had expected to behold a man driven by the scourge of Nemesis, whereas there was before him the calm face of a young athlete. The words died away on the lips of Julian. Without repugnance and without malice he was gazing upon this "good-natured beast"—thus mentally did he style his brother,—and reflected that to read admonitions as to morals to him would be just as senseless as to do so to a well-fed stallion. He merely asked in a whisper, after looking over his shoulder at the door in his turn:

"Why art thou travelling to Mediolanum? Or art thou not aware? . . ."

"Speak not of it. I am aware of all. But turning back is impossible. . . . 'Tis too late! . . ."

He pointed to his white neck.

"A hangman's noose,—dost thou understand? *He* is most softly drawing it tighter. *He* would dig me out from under the ground, Julian. 'Tis not even worth while discussing. 'Tis all over! We skylarked—and now 'tis all over. . . ."

"Hast thou two legions left thee in Antioch?"

"Not a one. *He* took away my best soldiers,—little by little, in a roundabout way, for my own weal, dost thou see,—everything for my own weal! How solicitous he is for me, how he doth yearn after me, how he thirsteth after my counsels! . . . Julian, he is a frightful man! Thou does not yet know, and may God grant that thou mayst never know, what a man he is. He sees all,—he sees five ells underground. He knoweth my most hidden thoughts,—those which e'en the head of my couch doth not know. He sees thee through and through as well. I fear him, brother!"

"Is it impossible to flee?"

"Soft, soft! . . . Whatever art thou saying! . . ."

An expression of a schoolboy's fright appeared on the face of Gallus.

"Nay, 'tis all over! I am now like a fish on an angle; he tugs most softly, lest the line break, for a Cæsar, no matter what his nature, is still a rather big fish. But I know,—I shall not tear myself off the hook,—sooner or later he will pull me out! . . . I see—how else but see?—that 'tis a trap, but still I thrust myself within it, —thrust myself in of my own accord, out of fear. All these six years, and even previously, ever since I can remember myself, I have lived in dread. Let it suffice! I I have made holiday, I have skylarked,—and let it suffice. Brother, *he* will slit my throat, even as a cook slits the gullet of a chick. But before that he will torture me to death with guiles, with caresses. 'Twould be better if he were to slit my throat as soon as may be! . . ."

Suddenly his eyes flared up:

"But if *she* were only here, right now, with me,—

what thinkest thou, brother?—why, she would save me,—she would of a certainty save me! That is why I say,—she was an amazing, an unusual woman! . . ."

Scúdilo, the tribune, entering the triclinium, with a fawning bow announced that on the morrow, in honour of the arrival of Cæsar, there would be races in the hippodrome at Constantinople, in which the famous rider Korax would participate. Gallus was overjoyed, like a child. He commanded a laurel wreath to be prepared, so that, in the event of a victory, he might with his own hands, in the presence of the people, crown Korax, his favourite. Then there began stories about horses, about races, about the dexterity of riders.

Gallus drank a great deal; of his recent fear there was never a trace; he laughed with open-hearted and light-minded laughter, as healthy people laugh when their conscience is clear. Only at the last minute of farewell he embraced Julian hard and burst into tears; his blue eyes began to blink helplessly.

"God grant thee weal, God grant thee weal . . ." he mumbled, falling into hypersensitive emotion, possibly from the wine. "I know thou alone didst love me,—thou, and Constantina. . . ."

And he whispered in Julian's ear:

"Thou shalt be happier than I,—thou knowest how to dissemble. I always envied thee in this. . . . Well, God grant thee weal! . . ."

Julian became sorry for him. He understood that his brother was no longer "to tear loose from the angle" of Constantius.

On the following day, under the same guard, Gallus rode out of Constantinople. Not far from the city gates

he met Taurus, newly reappointed as quæstor for Armenia. Taurus, a court upstart, looked brazenly at the Cæsar, and did not bow.

At the same time, letter after letter arrived from the Emperor.

From Adrianapolis on, only ten vehicles of the government post were left to Gallus,—he was compelled to abandon all his impedimenta, and his retinue, with the exception of two or three chamberlains and cup-bearers.

It was the time of late autumn. The roads had become bad from the rain, which had been pouring for days on end. The Cæsar was hurried along; he was not allowed to rest, to have his full sleep; it had been already a fortnight since he had bathed. One of the greatest sufferings for him was this unaccustomed sensation of dirt,—all his life he had prized his healthy, well-cared-for body; he now contemplated his uncleaned, unpared nails with the same ruefulness as the regal purple of his chlamys, soiled with the dust and mire of the highways. Not for an instant would Scúdilo quit him. Gallus had reason to fear this too attentive companion.

The tribune, when he had just arrived at the court of Antioch upon a commission from the Emperor, had through some inadvertent expression or innuendo offended the wife of the Cæsar, Constantina; she had been unexpectedly possessed by one of those attacks of blind, well-nigh insane fury to which she was subject. It was said that Constantina had ordered the Emperor's messenger to be chastised with rods and to be thrown in a dungeon,—others, however, refused to credit that even the quick-tempered spouse of the Cæsar could be capable of such *læsa majestas*, to the person of the Roman tribune. In any event, Constantina soon thought it over, and

released Scúdilo from the dungeon. He again appeared at the court of the Cæsar, as though naught had occurred, taking advantage of the fact that no one knew aught of a certainty; he did not even lodge information at Mediolanum, and swallowed his insult in silence, as persons envious of him expressed it. Perhaps the tribune feared that rumours of his opprobrious punishment might prove detrimental to his career at court.

During the journey of Gallus from Antioch to Mediolanum, Scúdilo rode in the one chariot with the Cæsar, without taking a single step away from him, looking after him servilely, ingratiating himself, not for one minute leaving him in peace, and treating him as an obstinate ailing child, whom he, Scúdilo, so loved that he had not the resolution to leave him. During dangerous crossings of rivers, on the quaking fascine-ways of the Illyrian marshes, with a tender solicitude he would clasp the Cæsar's waist firmly with his arm; and if the latter made an attempt to free himself, he would clasp him still firmer, with a tenderness still greater, asserting that he would sooner consent to die than allow such a precious life to undergo the least danger.

The tribune had a peculiar, thoughtful gaze, when, with a silent and prolonged smile, he would look, from the back, at the white, soft neck of Gallus, like that of a young maiden. The Cæsar would feel this gaze upon him, would grow ill at ease, and look around. At such moments he felt a desire to slap the cheek of the kindly tribune; but the poor captivê would soon come to himself and merely beg, in a plaintive voice, that they halt, in order to partake of even a small snack,—he ate and drank, in spite of everything, with his usual avidity.

At Norica they were met by two more of the Em-

peror's messengers,—the *comites* Barbation and Apodemus, with a cohort of His Majesty's own soldiers. Thereupon the false-face was cast off,—around the palace of Gallus a watch was set at night, as around a prison.

In the evening Barbation, entering the chamber of the Cæsar, and without showing any marks of respect, ordered him to take off the regal chlamys, and to put on a simple tunic and paludamentum; Scúdilo evinced zeal during this divestment,—so hurriedly did he fall to taking the chlamys off Gallus that he ripped the purple.

On the following morning the captive was made to sit in a two-wheeled wooden post-vehicle,—a *carpenta*, —which was used for the transportation of petty government clerks on official matters; this carpenta had no top. A piercing wind was blowing, a wet snow falling. Scúdilo, as was his wont, embraced Gallus with one hand, and with the other fell to fingering the latter's new garb.

" 'Tis a goodly garb,—downy, warm. In my opinion, far better than the purple. Purple will never warm one. Whereas this has a little lining, soft, of wool. . . ."

And, as though to feel the lining, he slipped his hand beneath the clothing of the Cæsar, then within the tunic, and, suddenly, with low, polite laughter, drew out the blade of a dagger which Gallus had succeeded in hiding in its folds.

"That is wrong,—most wrong!" Scúdilo began with a kindly severity. "There is always the possibility of cutting one's self somehow, by some chance. What sort of playthings be these!" And he threw the dagger in the road.

An infinite exhaustion and weakness of body were gaining possession of Gallus. He closed his eyes, and felt

Scúdilo embracing him with a still greater tenderness. To the Cæsar it seemed that he was in the throes of a repulsive dream.

They halted not far from the fortress of Póla, in Istria, on the shore of the Adriatic Sea. In this same city, several years back, had taken place a sanguine malefaction,—the assassination of the young hero, Crispus, son of Constantine the Great. The town, populated by soldiers, seemed a dismal, God-forsaken hole. The endless barracks were built in the tasteless governmental style of the times of Diocletian. Snow lay on their roofs; the wind howled through the empty streets; one heard the surging of the sea. Gallus was led off into one of the barracks. They seated him opposite a window, so that the harsh wintry light fell straight into his eyes. The most experienced of the Emperor's sleuths, Eusebius, a short little ancient, wrinkled and amiable, with a soft, ingratiating voice, like that of a father confessor, ever rubbing his hands from the cold, began the interrogation. Gallus felt a deathly fatigue; he said anything and everything at the will of Eusebius; but at the mention of "Governmental treason" he paled and jumped up:

"Not I, not I!" he fell to gibbering, stupidly and helplessly. " 'Twas Constantina's doings,—all Constantina's doings. . . . Without her I would not have done aught. She demanded the executions of Theophilus, of Domitian, of Clematius, of Mantius and others. God sees 'twas not I. . . . She did not impart aught to me. . . . I did not e'en know. . . ."

Eusebius was contemplating him with a soft, mocking smile:

" 'Tis well," he uttered, "I shall thus report it to the Emperor,—that his own sister, the wife of the erstwhile

Cæsar, is guilty of all. The interrogation is concluded. Lead him away," he commanded the legionaries.

Soon thereafter was received the sentence of death from the Emperor Constantius, who had deemed as a personal affront this accusation of his dead sister as perpetratrix of all the murders in Antioch.

When the sentence was read to the Cæsar, he lost consciousness and swooned in the arms of the soldiers. The unfortunate hoped for pardon to the last minute. And even now he thought he would be given several days,—several hours, at the least,—to prepare for death. But there were rumours current that the soldiers of the Theban legion were turbulent and plotting the liberation of Gallus. He was immediately led off to be executed.

It was early morn. Snow had fallen in the night and had covered the black, viscid mire. The cold, dead sun illuminated the snow; a blinding reflection fell on the vividly white stuccoed walls of the large hall in the barracks, whither Gallus had been brought. No trust was placed in the soldiery,—almost all of them loved and pitied him. For headsman they had chosen a butcher, who on several occasions had executed on the square of Póla the thieves and bandits of Istria. The barbarian did not know how to handle the Roman sword and had brought a broad axe, in the nature of a two-edged battle-axe, to which he had become accustomed in slaughtering in the shambles swine and rams. The butcher had a dull face, handsome, and sleepy; he was a Slav by birth. The fact that the condemned was a Cæsar was concealed from him, and the headsman thought that he was to execute a thief. Gallus before death became meek and calm. With a meaningless smile, he allowed them to wreak their full will upon him; it

seemed to him that he was but a babe; during his childhood he had also cried and resisted when they would put him by force into a warm bath and wash him, but afterwards, having submitted, he would find it pleasant. But, upon seeing the butcher moving the broad edge of the axe back and forth over a moistened whetstone, a tremor ran through all his members.

He was led off into an adjacent room; there the tonsori painstakingly, to the very skin, clipped off his soft aureate curls, the pride and beauty of the young Cæsar. Returning from the room of the tonsori he was left for an instant face to face with the tribune Scúdilo. The Cæsar unexpectedly fell at the feet of his bitterest enemy.

"Save me, Scúdilo! I know thou canst! Last night I received a letter from the soldiers of the Theban legion. Let me say but a word to them,—they shall liberate me. In the treasury of the temple at Mysia lie thirty talents, all mine. None knows of them. I shall give them to thee. And I shall give thee still more. The soldiers love me. . . . I shall make thee my friend, my brother, my co-regent,—a Cæsar! . . ."

He embraced the tribune's knees, waxing mad with hope. And suddenly Scúdilo, with a shudder, felt the Cæsar's lips touch his hand. The tribune uttered never a word in answer, leisurely drew his hand away, and looked upon him with a smile.

Gallus was ordered to take off his clothes. He did not want to untie his sandals,—his feet were dirty. When he was left almost naked, the butcher began tying his hands behind his back, as he was accustomed to do with thieves. Scúdilo darted to his help. But when Gallus felt the touch of his fingers, he was possessed by a mad frenzy, —he tore himself out of the hands of the headsman,

seized the tribune by his throat with both hands, and began strangling him; naked, tall, he resembled a young, powerful and frightful beast. They ran up to him from behind, dragging him away from the tribune, then tying his arms and legs. Simultaneously, below, in the courtyard of the barracks, there resounded the cries of the soldiers of the Theban Legion: "Long live Cæsar Gallus!"

The assassins hurried. They brought a large wooden stump or block, in the nature of an executioner's block. Gallus was forced to his knees. Barbation, Bainobaudes and Apodemus held his arms, his legs, his shoulders. It was Scúdilo who bent the head of Gallus to the block. With a smile of voluptuousness on his pale lips, using both hands, he pressed down upon this helplessly resisting head, feeling with his fingers, grown chill from delectation, the smooth, newly shaved skin, still humid from the soap of the tonsori, gazing with rapture at the plump, soft neck, as white as the necks of young maidens.

The butcher was not a skilled headsman. Lowering his axe, he almost touched the neck, but his blow went amiss. Then, for a second time, he raised his battle-axe, shouting to Scúdilo:

"Not that way! To the right! Hold his head more to the right!"

Gallus was seized by tremors, and in horror fell to howling in a long-drawn, inhuman voice, like the bellowing of a bull at a shambles when the first blow fails to kill.

The shouts of the soldiery could be heard, growing constantly nearer and clearer:

"Long live Cæsar Gallus!"

The butcher raised his axe high and struck. The hot blood spurted upon the hands of Scúdilo. The head fell

and struck against the stone floor. At this instant the legionaries dashed in. Barbation, Apodemus and the tribune of the shield-bearers darted towards the other exit.

The headsman stood still, at a loss. But Scúdilo had managed to whisper in his ear that he take away the head of the executed Cæsar,—the legionaries would not recognize to whom the headless corpse had belonged; but if they did, they would be capable of tearing them all into pieces.

"Then this is no thief?" muttered the dumfounded headsman.

There was nothing whereby to seize the smoothly shaven head. The butcher at first shoved it under his arm. But this seemed to him inconvenient. Thereupon he stuck a finger in its mouth, hooked it, and carried off thus that head whose mere nod, on a time, had caused so many mortal heads to bow.

Julian, upon learning of the death of his brother, reflected: "Now 'tis my turn."

XII

In Athens Julian was to adopt the "angelic rank,"—to assume the tonsure of a monk.

It was a morning in spring. The sun had not yet risen. He had stood through matins in church and directly from the service walked for several stadia parallelling the current of the Illissus, whose banks were thickly grown over with platanes and wild grapes. He loved this isolated spot near Athens, on the very shore of the rapid stream, softly swishing, like silk, over its gravelly bottom. From here one could see through the mist the reddish scorched crags of the Acropolis, and the outlines of the Parthenon, barely touched by the light of the morning glow. Julian, taking off his footgear, waded into the shallow waters of the Illissus bare-foot. There was an odour of the opening blossoms of the grapes; in this odour there was already a foretaste of wine,—as, in the first reveries of childhood, there is a foresensing of love.

He sat down on the roots of a platane, without taking his feet out of the water, opened *Phædrus*, and fell to reading.

Socrates was speaking to Phædrus, in their dialogue:

"Let us turn in yonder direction,—let us go along the current of the Illissus. We shall choose an isolated spot where we may sit. Doth it not seem to thee, Phædrus, that here the air is especially soft and fragrant, and that in the very song of the cicadas there is something delectable, recalling the summer? But what pleases me here most of all are these tall grasses."

Julian looked about him,—everything was as of yore, —as it had been eight æons ago; the cicadas were striking up their songs in the grass.

"The feet of Socrates trod this earth," he reflected, and, hiding his head in the thick grass, he kissed the ground.

"Hail, Julian! Thou hast chosen a glorious spot for reading. May I sit down beside thee?"

"Sit down. I am glad thou hast come. Poets do not disturb solitude."

Julian glanced up at the rather spare and small man in a disproportionately long mantle,—the versifier Publius Optatian Porphyrius; and, involuntarily smiling, reflected: "He is so small, anæmic and puny, that one can readily believe his probable and immediate metamorphosis from a man into a cicada, as is told in Plato's myth anent poets."

Publius could, like to the cicadas, live almost without food, but he had not received from the gods the ability of insensibility to hunger and thirst,—his face, of an earthy colour, long unshaven, and his bloodless lips, preserved the imprint of a hungry despondence.

"Wherefore, Publius, hast thou such a long mantle?" queriod Julian.

" 'Tis another's," answered the poet with a philosophical equanimity. "That is, it may e'en be said to be mine, but temporarily. I, dost thou see, rent a room, share and share alike, with the youth Hephæstion, who is studying eloquence in Athens,—he will, sooner or later, be a pre-eminent advocate; in the meantime he is poor,—as poor as I, as poor as a lyrical poet,—and that tells the whole story! We have pawned our clothing, our utensils,

even our ink-well. There was left but this one mantle for both of us. In the morning I go out, while Hephæstion studies Demosthenes; in the evening he dons the chlamys, while I compose verses at home. 'Tis a pity that Hephæstion is of a tall stature, whereas I am short. But there is no help: I go about 'clad in long garments,' like the Trojan women of eld."

Publius Optatian burst into laughter, and his earthy face recalled a professional mourner grown merry.

"Dost see, Julian," continued the poet, "I place my hopes on the death of a most rich widow of a Roman lease-holder,—the happy heirs shall order an epitaph from me and pay me generously. It is to be regretted that the widow is stubborn and hale,—despite the efforts of the leeches and the heirs, she has no inclination to die. Or else I would have long since bought myself a mantle. —Hearken, Julian,—come thou at once with me."

"Whither?"

"Trust me. Thou shalt be grateful."

"What mysteries be these?"

"Do not be lazy, do not ask questions,—arise and let us go. The poet shall do no evil to the friend of poets. Thou shalt behold a goddess. . . ."

"What goddess?"

"Artemis the Huntress."

"A picture? A statue?"

"Better than picture and statue. If thou dost love beauty, take thy mantle and follow me!"

The versifier had such an amusingly mysterious air that Julian's curiosity was aroused; he got up, dressed, and followed him.

"There is one condition,—say naught, nor express amazement,—or else the charm will vanish. In the name

of Calliope and Erato, put thyself in my hands! . . . 'Tis but a step or so away. And, lest the way be wearisome, I shall read thee the beginning of the epitaph to my lease-holder's widow."

They came out on the dusty road. In the first rays of the sun the brazen shield of Athena Promachos flashed over the Acropolis, now rosy tinted; the tip of her slender spear glowed warmly in the sky, like a lit candle. The cicadas along the stone enclosures, behind which murmured waters under the groves of fig-trees, were singing stridently as though in rivalry of the voice of the poet, grown hoarse but inspired, as he declaimed his stanzas.

Publius Optatian Porphyrius was a man not devoid of gifts; but his life had formed very strangely. A few years ago he had had a pretty little house, "a veritable temple of Hermes," in Constantinople, not far from a suburb of Chalcedonia; his father had been a trader in olive oil and had left him a modest estate which would have permitted Optatian to live without poverty. But his blood seethed. A worshipper of ancient Hellenism, he waxed indignant at that which he styled the triumph of Christian bondage. On one occasion he wrote a poem with the love of freedom for its theme, which poem did not prove to the liking of the Emperor Constantius. Constantius would have considered the verses twaddle, but they contained an innuendo as to the person of the Emperor,—this he could not forgive. Punishment fell upon the composer,—his little house and all his property were confiscated for the treasury; he himself was sent off to a wild little isle of the Archipelago. Upon this islet there was naught save crags, goats, and fever. Optatian did not bear up under his trial; he cursed

his dreams of ancient Roman liberty, and decided to gloss over his fault, no matter at what cost.

During sleepless nights, suffering with fever, he wrote upon his island a poem in glorification of the Emperor, in *centoni* out of Virgil: the separate verses of this ancient poet were so dovetailed that the result was a new work. This brain-racking trick found favour at court,—Optatian had sensed the taste of the age.

After this he attempted tricks still more amazing: he wrote a topiary dithyramb to Constantius in verses of differing lengths, so that the lines formed entire figures,—as, for instance, a shepherd's flute of many reeds, or a water-organ, or else a sacrificial altar, in which the smoke was represented by several uneven, very short lines above the altar. A miracle of ingenuity were his quadrangular poems, consisting of forty or twenty hexameters; certain letters were outlined in red ink,—upon being juxtaposed the red letters within the squares represented now the monogram of Christ, now a flower, now a cunning design, in which there appeared new lines with new felicitations; finally, the last four hexameters in the book could be read in eighteen different ways,—from the beginning, from the end, from the middle, from the side, from below, and so on,—no matter how one read, all resolved itself into an encomium of the Emperor.

The poor scribe almost lost his mind from this labour. But then his victory was complete. Constantius went off into raptures,—it seemed to him that Optatian had eclipsed all the poets of antiquity. The Emperor indited a letter to him in his own hand, averring that he was always ready to patronise the Muses. "In our age," he concluded, not without floridity, "my well-disposed

attention follows every one who indites verses, like the soft blowing of zephyrs." However, his estate was not returned to the poet; they did but give him a little money, allowing him to leave the accursed island and settle down in Athens.

Here he led a life far from gay,—the helper of the least hostler in the circus, by comparison with him, was lapped in luxury. The poet was compelled to watch whole days through in the anterooms of vainglorious nobles, in the company of undertakers, Ebrew traders, and the arrangers of wedding processions, in order to obtain an order for an epithalamium, an epitaph, or an amatory missive. His pay was meted out in coppers. Yet Porphyrius did not despair, nor lose heart, hoping that some day he would present to the Emperor such a trick as would win a full forgiveness.

Julian felt that despite all the debasement of Porphyrius his love for Hellas burned undimmed within him. He was an exquisite connoisseur of ancient poesy. Julian conversed with him willingly.

They turned aside from the great highway and walked up to the high stone wall of a *palæstra*. All the region around was deserted. Two black lambs were nibbling the grass. Near the locked gates, where from the crevices in the portal steps poppies and dandelions grew, there stood a chariot, harnessed with two white horses; their manes were clipped, like those of sculptured steeds. A slave was looking after them,—a little ancient with an egg-like bald head, barely clouded over with a grey fuzz. The little ancient proved a deaf-mute, but amiable. He recognised Optatian, and kindlily fell to nodding his head, indicating the locked gates.

"Give me thy purse for a minute," said Optatian to

his companion. "I shall take a denarius or two for this old clown to drink wine with."

He tossed him a coin, and, with servile grimaces and lowing the mute opened the door before them. They entered a half-dark, long peristyle.

Between the columns one could see xysts,—covered ways intended for the exercises of the athletes; these xysts were devoid of sand, and had become grown over with grass. The friends entered the broad inner court.

Julian's curiosity had been aroused by all this mysteriousness. Optatian led him by the hand in silence.

One gained admittance to the second court through the portals of the *exedræ,* small marble recesses which had on a time served as auditoria for the sages and orators of Athens. The field cicadas were now chirping where once had rung the speeches of celebrated heroes; over the lush grasses, like those which grow upon graves, bees hovered; all was quiet and pensive. Suddenly from somewhere was heard a feminine voice; then a thud,—probably that of a copper discus against marble,—and laughter.

Stealing up, like thieves, they hid in the semi-murk between the columns, in the division of the *elæothesium,* or unctuarium, wherein the ancient wrestlers, during their contests, used to anoint themselves with oil. From behind the columns one could see an oblong quadrangle, under the open sky, intended for ball playing and discus throwing; it had been evenly strewn, probably recently, with fresh sand.

Julian glanced—and made a step backward.

Twenty paces away stood a young woman, stark naked. She held a copper discus in her hand. Julian made a quick move to depart, but in the ingenuous eyes of

Optatian, in his pale face, there was such great veneration that Julian comprehended why this worshipper of Hellenism had brought him hither; he felt that not a single sinful thought could have birth in the soul of the poet,—his rapture was holy. Optatian whispered in the ear of his friend, seizing him by the arm with a strong grip:

"Julian, we are now in ancient Laconia, nine æons ago. Dost remember the verses of Propertius, *Ludi Laconum?*"

And he fell to murmuring, in a barely audible, inspired whisper:

> *"Multa tuæ, Sparte, miramur jura palæstræ.*
> *Sed mage virginei tot bona gymnasii;*
> *Quod non infames exerceret corpore ludos*
> *Inter luctantes nuda puella viros."* *

"Who is she?" asked Julian.

"I know not; I did not want to find out. . . ."

" 'Tis well; be silent."

Now he was looking directly and avidly at the discus thrower, no longer ashamed and feeling that there was no impulsion, no wisdom, to feel shame.

She stepped back a few paces, stooped forward, and, putting her left leg in front, her right hand with the discus being drawn back, with a powerful motion swung and threw the copper circle so high that it sparkled in the rising sun, and, falling, struck resoundingly against the pediment of a distant column. To Julian it seemed that an ancient marble by Phidias was before his eyes.

* "Sparta, we are struck by many of the laws of thy gymnastic games; but, most of all, by that of the chaste palæstra,—inasmuch as thy maidens, nude, among the male wrestlers, give themselves up to games not inglorious."

"The best shot of all!" said a twelve-year-old girl in a refulgent tunic, standing by the column.

"Myrrha, give me the discus," uttered the thrower. "I can throw it still higher,—thou shalt see! Mèroë, step aside, or else I shall wound thee, even as Apollo did Hyacinth."

Mèroë, an old Ægyptian slave, judging by her motley apparel and swarthy face, was preparing in alabaster amphoræ aromatic substances for the bath. Julian gathered that the mute slave and the chariot with the white steeds belonged to this lover of the ancient games.

Having finished discus-throwing, she took from the pale, black-eyed Myrrha a bent bow, and a quiver, and took out a long, feathered arrow. The girl was aiming at a black circle which served as a mark at the opposite end of the ephebeun. The string sang; the arrow soared away whistling and struck the mark; then a second followed, and a third.

"Artemis the Huntress!" whispered Optatian.

Suddenly the tender rosy ray of the rising sun, gliding in between the columns, fell upon the girl's face, and her small bosom, almost like that of an adolescent boy. Having thrown aside the arrows and the bow, dazzled, she covered her face with her hands. Swallows, with a cry, were darting above the palæstra and plunging into the sky. She uncovered her face, throwing back her arms above her head. Her hair was a light gold at the tips, like yellow honey in the sun, with a darker, rufous shade near the roots; her lips had fallen half open in a smile of childlike joy; the sun glided lower and lower over her nude body. She stood there, pure, clad in light as in the most modest of raiments.

"Myrrha," pensively and slowly uttered the girl, "look,

what a sky! One would fain plunge within it and sink with a cry, like the swallows. Dost remember, when we said that men could not be happy, for that they have no wings? One feels envious when looking at birds. . . . One must be light, altogether nude, Myrrha,—well, e'en as I am now,—and deep, deep in the sky, and feel that this state is to be forever, that there will never be aught else, nor that there can ever be aught else, save the sky and the sun about the light, nude body! . . ."

Stretching herself up to her full height, extending her arms toward the sky, she sighed, as men sigh after that which is lost forever. The sun was descending lower and lower; it reached her hips with a caress by now growing vehement. Thereupon the girl shuddered, and became ashamed, as though some living and passionate being had beheld her nudity,—with one hand she screened her bosom, with the other her loins, with the eternal gesture of modesty, like that of the Aphrodite of Knidos.

"Mèroë, my raiment,—Mèroë!" she cried out, looking about her with large, frightened eyes.

Julian could not recall how he had left the palæstra; his heart was aflame. The face of the poet was solemn and pensive, like that of a man but come from a temple.

"Thou art not wroth?" he asked Julian.

"O nay! Wherefore?"

"Mayhap, for a Christian, 'tis a temptation? . . ."

"Temptation there was none."

"Ay, ay. So I thought."

They again came out upon the dusty highway, already sultry, and set out in the direction of Athens. Optatian continued softly, as though to himself:

"Oh, how shamefaced and hideous we are now! We dread our dismal and pitiful nakedness; we hide it, for

that we feel ourselves impure. Whereas formerly!—For all this has at one time existed, Julian! The Spartan maids came out on the palæstra nude, proud, before all the people. And none feared temptation. The pure looked on the pure. They were even as children, as the gods. And to know that this can be nevermore, that this freedom and purity and joy of life will be repeated on earth nevermore,—nevermore!"

He let his head sink on his breast and heaved a profound sigh. They came out into the Street of Tripods. Not far from the Acropolis the friends parted in silence. Julian entered the shade of the Propylæa. He went past the Poikilé Stoa with its paintings by Parrhasius, depicting the battles of Marathon and Salamis; then, past the little temple of the Wingless Victory, he approached the Parthenon.

He had but to shut his eyes to behold the naked, splendidly beautiful body of Artemis the Huntress; and, whenever he opened them, the marble of the Parthenon in the sun seemed alive and aureate, like the body of the goddess. And, before all, contemning death, he felt a desire to embrace this marble, warmed by the sun, in his arms, and to kiss it, as one would a living body.

Not far from him were standing two young men in dark garments, with pale, austere faces,—Gregory of Nazianzen, and Basil of Cæsarea. The Hellenes dreaded them, as their most powerful enemies; the Christians hoped that the two friends would be great teachers in the Church. They were contemplating Julian.

"What is the matter with him to-day?" said Gregory. "Why, is this a monk? What motions! How he shuts his eyes! What a smile! Can it be that thou dost believe in his piety, Basil?"

"I myself have witnessed it; he prayed in church, weeping . . ."

"Hypocrisy!"

"Wherefore, then, doth he come to us, seeking our friendship, discussing the Holy Writ? . . ."

"He doth but mock, or seeks to tempt us. Believe not in him! He is the Tempter. Mark my words, my brother, —the Roman Empire doth nurture a great evil in this youth. He is the Enemy!"

The friends walked on, side by side, with eyes downcast. They were captivated neither by the austere caryatid-virgins of Erechtheum, nor the white temple, laughing in the sun, of the Nike Apteros, nor the Propylæa, nor the Parthenon. Their faces were dismal. They desired but one thing,—to demolish all these idol-temples of the dæmons.

The sun made the two monks—Gregory of Nazianzen, and Basil of Cæsarea—cast two long, black shadows upon the white marble.

"I want to see her," thought Julian, "I must know who she is!"

XIII

"The gods sent mortals into the universe to have them turn neat phrases."

"Splendid! Splendidly put, Mamertinus! Repeat it, ere I forget,—I shall write it down," his friend and reverent admirer Lampridius, a teacher of eloquence, implored Mamertinus, an Athenian advocate much in vogue. He took a waxed diptych out of his pouch and a pointed stylus of steel, preparing to write.

"I say," Mamertinus began again, beaming with a simpering smile upon his fellow conversationalists, who were reclining at supper, "I say, men are sent by the gods—"

"Nay, nay, thou didst not put it thus, Mamertinus," Lampridius interrupted him. "Thou didst put it considerably better: 'the gods sent mortals.' "

"Well, yes,—I said: the gods sent mortals into the universe solely to have them turn phrases neatly."

"Thou didst now add 'solely'—and it has turned out still better.—'Solely to have them—' "

And Lampridius in reverent awe wrote down the words of the advocate, like the utterance of an oracle.

This was an amicable supper, given by the Roman senator Hortensius, not far from Piræus, at the villa of his young and wealthy ward Arsinoë. Mamertinus had that same day delivered his famous speech in defence of Barnaby the banker. None doubted that the Jew Barnaby was a knave. But,—to say naught of his elo-

quence,—the advocate was possessed of such a voice that one of his innumerable inamoratas asseverated: "I never listen to the words of Mamertinus; 'tis not necessary for me to know what or of whom he is speaking; I do but drink in the sound of his voice; especially when his voice swoons at the terminations of words,—why, 'tis something unbelievable: 'tis no voice of mortal, but a divine nectar, the sighings of an Æolian harp!"

Although common, coarse persons called the usurer Barnaby "a bloodsucker, devouring the estates of widows and orphans," the Athenian judges had with delight acquitted one who was a client of Mamertinus. The advocate received from the Ebrew fifty thousand sesterces, and during the little celebration given in his honour by Hortensius felt himself in fine fettle. But he had a habit of playing the invalid, demanding that he be constantly pampered.

"Ah, I have become so fatigued to-day, my friends," he uttered in a plaintive tone. "I am altogether ill.—But where is Arsinoë?"

"She will come right away. Arsinoë has just received from the Alexandrean Museum a new scientific appliance,—she is very much taken up with it. But I shall order her to be called," offered Hortensius.

"Nay, 'tis not necessary," uttered the advocate, as if the matter were of not the least import. " 'Tis not necessary.—But what nonsense! A young girl,—and physics! What can there be in common? Even Aristophanes and Euripides ridiculed female savants. And rightly so! A capricious creature, this Arsinoë of thine, Hortensius! Were she not so comely, really, with all her sculpturing and mathematics, she would

seem . . ." He did not finish and turned around to look through the open window.

"What is one to do?" replied Hortensius. "She is a spoilt child. An orphan, without father or mother. Really, I am but a guardian, and do not want to hamper her in anything."

"Ay, ay. . . ." The advocate was no longer listening to him.

"My friends, I feel . . ."

"What is it?" uttered several voices, in concern.

"I feel . . . there seems to be a draft! . . ."

"Shall we close the shutters?" offered the host.

"Nay, no need of that. 'Twill be stuffy. But I have tired my throat so. The day after to-morrow I have to defend again. Let me have a chest-protector and a small rug for my feet. I fear me I shall become hoarse from the freshness of the night."

Hephæstion,—the young man who shared lodgings with the poet Optatian,—a pupil of Lampridius, and Lampridius himself, dashed off with all their might to offer the chest-protector to Mamertinus. It was a handsomely embroidered piece of fleecy white wool, from which the advocate never parted, in order that, at the least danger of catching cold, he might envelop his precious throat with it. Mamertinus looked after himself as a lover does after a pampered woman. All had grown accustomed to this state of affairs. He loved himself so ingenuously that he compelled other people to love him as well.

"This chest-protector was embroidered for me by the matron Fabiola," he imparted with a smile.

"The wife of the senator?" asked Hortensius.

"Ay. I shall tell you an anecdote concerning her. On

one occasion I indited a small trifle in the way of a letter,—true, rather elegant, but, of course, a mere bagatelle, of five lines in Greek,—to another lady, also an admirer of mine, who had sent me a basket of cherries; I thanked her in a jocose vein, imitating Pliny. Just imagine, then, my friends,—Fabiola felt such a desire to be the first to read my letter and to transcribe it for her collection of famous epistles, that she despatched two slaves to waylay my messenger. And so they fell upon him in the night in a wild ravine; he thought them robbers, but they did him no evil, gave him money,—but took the letter away from him,—and Fabiola was, after all, the first to read it, and even committed it to heart!"

"Of course, I know,—I know! Oh, she is a remarkable woman," Lampridius chimed in with him. "I saw it myself,—thy letters lie in a carved coffer she has, made of lemon-wood, like veritable precious things. She learns them by rote, and asserts that they are written better than any verses. Fabiola reasons justly: 'If Alexander the Great treasured the poems of Homer in a casket of cedar-wood, why may I not treasure the letters of Mamertinus in a coffer of lemon-wood?' "

"My friends, this goose liver in saffron sauce is a miracle of perfection! I counsel you to try it. Who prepared it, Hortensius?"

"The head cook, Dædalus."

"Glory be to Dædalus! Thy cook is a veritable poet."

"Dear Gargilian, is it possible to style a cook a poet?" the teacher of eloquence voiced his doubts. "Dost thou not thereby affront the divine Muses, our patronesses?"

"The Muses ought to be flattered, Lampridius. I hold that gastronomy is an art like any other. 'Tis time to drop prejudices!"

Gargilian, a Roman bureaucrat from the chancery of the prefect, was an obese, well-fed fellow, whose triple dewlap was painstakingly shaven and perfumed; his grey hair was clipped short, with purplish folds of fat showing through; his was a clever face. He had, for many years now, been accounted an indispensable participant in all the gatherings of the élite in Athens. Gargilian loved but two things in life,—a good style and a good table. Gastronomy and Poesy in his case were blended into a single delight.

"Let us suppose that I take an oyster," he was saying, bringing the shell up to his mouth with his fat fingers, be-ringed with enormous amethysts and rubies. "I take an oyster and swallow it. . . ."

He swallowed, puckering up his eyes, and slightly smacking his upper lip,—this lip had a special gourmandizing expression; protruding, cuspidate, sinuous, it seemed something in the nature of a small proboscis; in showing his appreciation of a sonorous stanza of Anacreon or Moschus, it squirmed just as voluptuously as at a supper, when he was enjoying a sauce of nightingales' tongues.

"I swallow it, and immediately sense," Gargilian went on, without hurrying, with profound thought, "I sense that the oyster is from the shores of Britannia, yes,—but by no means, my friends, an Ostian oyster, and not one from Tarentum. Would you have me . . . ? I shall shut my eyes, and immediately distinguish from precisely what sea any oyster or fish is."

"But what has poesy to do with it?" he was somewhat impatiently cut short by Mamertinus, who did not relish anybody else's occupying the centre of attention, while he was present.

"Just imagine then, my friends," the gastronome continued unperturbed, "that I have not, for a long time, been at the marge of the ocean, and that I love it, and yearn after it. I assure you, that a good oyster hath such a briny, fresh odour of the sea, that it suffices but to swallow it, to imagine one's self on the marge of the ocean; I shut my eyes and behold the waves, behold the crags, I feel the breath of the sea, 'the misty sea,' to use an expression of Homer's. Nay, do ye but tell me upon your conscience,—well, now, what stanza of *The Odyssey* can awaken within me with such vividness a recollection of the sea as the odour of a fresh oyster can? Or, let us suppose, I cut a peach, I taste of its fragrant juice. Wherein, tell me, is the scent of a violet or a rose better than the taste of a peach? The poets describe forms, colours, sounds. Why cannot taste be as splendidly beautiful as colour, sound, or form? Mere prejudice, my friends,—mere prejudice! The taste is the greatest, and, as yet, least understood gift of the gods. The blending of tastes forms a lofty and most exquisite harmony, like to the blending of sounds. I affirm that there is a tenth Muse,—the Muse of Gastronomy."

"Well, peaches, oysters,—I'll concede the point," rejoined the teacher of eloquence. "But what beauty can there be in a goose-liver in saffron sauce?"

"But thou findest beauty, Lampridius, not only in the idylls of Theocritus, but in the comedies of Plautus as well,—in the coarsest street jests of his slaves? Is it not so?"

"I do,—granted."

"Dost see, my friend? Well, and as for me, I can find beauty even in a goose-liver,—truly, I am ready to

crown, because of it, the cook Dædalus with a wreath of laurel, even as I would Pindar for an Olympian ode!"

Two new guests appeared in the doorway,—they were Julian and the versifier Publius. Hortensius yielded the place of honour to Julian. The hungry eyes of Publius took on a glow at the sight of the multitude of tempting dishes. The poet was in a new chlamys, which was to his measure. The widow of the lease-holder must have died, and he had received the money for an epitaph. The conversation was resumed.

Now the teacher of eloquence, Lampridius, was narrating how, out of curiosity, he had once gone in Rome to hear a Christian evangelist, who was fulminating against the "pagan grammarians." The grammarians, the Christian averred, esteem men not for their virtue, but for good diction. They think it less criminal to slay a man than to pronounce the word *homo* with a wrong aspiration! Lampridius was indignant at these jeers; he asserted that the Christian evangelists bore such a hatred against the good diction of the rhetoricians because they knew that their own diction was barbarous; they were ruining ancient eloquence,—confusing boorish ignorance with virtue; to them every one who knew how to speak was under suspicion. In the opinion of Lampridius, on the day that eloquence perished, Hellas and Rome would perish and men would be transformed into dumb brutes. And the Christian evangelists were doing everything that lay in their power to bring the people to such a sorry pass.

"Who knows?" Mamertinus remarked in deep thought. "Mayhap a good diction is more important than virtue. Both slaves and barbarians are virtuous."

Hephæstion was explaining to his neighbour, Junius

Mauricus, what, precisely, Cicero meant by his counsel: *Causac mendaciunculis adspergere.*

"*Mendaciunculis* signifieth 'little lies.' Cicero allows, and even counsels, the strewing of one's speech with inventions,—*mendaciunculis.* He admits falsehood, if it doth but ornament diction."

Thereafter followed a dispute as to how an orator ought to commence his speech,—with an anapest or a dactyl. Julian felt bored. They all turned to him, asking his opinion anent dactyls and anapests. He confessed frankly that he had never given this matter much thought, and supposed that the orator ought to be concerned rather with the context of his speech than with such trifles. Mamertinus, Lampridius and Hephæstion waxed indignant,—in their opinion the context of a speech did not matter; to an orator it ought to make no difference whether he spoke pro or con; nor was it only the meaning that had little significance,—even the combination of the words was of secondary importance; the chief element was sounds, the music of the speech, new, mellifluous combinations of letters; it was necessary that even a barbarian, who might not understand a word of Greek, should feel the charm and beauty of the speech.

"Here are two lines of Propertius," said Gargilian, "you shall see what sounds mean in poesy, and how insignificant the meaning is. Listen:

Et Veneris dominæ volucres, mea turba, columbæ,
Tinguunt Gorgoneo punica rostra lacu.

What bewitchment! What canorousness! What care I for meaning? All the beauty is in the sounds, in the choice of vowels and consonants. For these sounds I would give away the virtue of Juvenal, the wisdom of Lucretius.

Nay, do you but attend,—what sweetness, what murmuring of rills:

Et Veneris dominæ, mea turba, columbæ!"

And his upper lip smacked from pleasure. They were all repeating the two lines of Propertius, nor could they be sated with their beautiful charm. Their eyes took on a glow; they were inciting one another to an orgy of rhetoric.

"Do you but listen," Mamertinus was whispering in his soft, swooning voice, resembling an Æolian harp, "*'tinguunt Gorgoneo—'* "

"*'Tinguunt Gorgoneo!'* " the clerk of the prefect kept on repeating. "I swear by Pallas, 'tis pleasing to the very palate,—as though one were swallowing a flow of thick, mulled wine, mixed with Attic honey:

'Tinguunt Gorgoneo—'

Note how many *g's* there are, one after the other,—'tis the cooing of a turtle-dove. And further—

'punica rostra lacu—' "

" 'Tis amazing, inimitable!" Lampridius was whispering, shutting his eyes in delectation.

Julian felt embarrassed, and, at the same time, found it amusing, to contemplate this voluptuous inebriation with sounds.

" 'Tis necessary that the words be somewhat meaningless," Lampridius concluded pompously, "that they course along, that they murmur like rills, that they sing, disturbing neither the hearing nor the heart; only then is full delectation in sounds possible."

In the doorway, through which Julian had been looking all the time, as though he were expecting some one, inaudibly, unnoticed of any, there appeared, like a shade, a white and graceful human figure.

The shutters were opened wide; a pure moonlight fell into the room and blended with the red reflection of the lamps on the mosaic of the floor, glistening like a mirror, and on the walls with frescoes depicting slumbrous Endymion being caressed by Luna. The white vision did not stir, like a statue; the ancient Athenian peplum, of soft silvery wool, fell in long, straight folds, caught up under the bosom with a narrow cincture; the moonlight shone upon the peplum; the face remained in the semi-murk. She who had entered was gazing at Julian,—Julian gazed upon her. They were smiling to one another, knowing that this smile was unnoticed of any. She laid a finger on her lips and was listening intently to that which was being said at the table. Suddenly Mamertinus, who was carrying on an animated discussion with Lampridius concerning the grammatical distinctions between the first and the second aorist, exclaimed:

"Arsinoë! At last! Hast thou resolved to forsake thy new physical instrument and thy statues for us?"

She entered, and greeted all with a simple smile. She was that same discus-thrower whom, a month ago, Julian had beheld in the abandoned palæstra. Optatian Publius the versifier, knowing everything and everybody in Athens, had become acquainted with Hortensius and Arsinoë, and had brought Julian into their house.

The father of Arsinoë, an old Roman senator, Helvidius Priscus, had died during the last years of the reign of Constantine the Great. His two daughters, by a German captive, Arsinoë and Myrrha, Helvidius, dying, had

left to the guardianship of his old friend Quintius Hortensius, whom he respected for his love of ancient Rome and his hatred of Christianity. A distant relative of Arsinoë, owner of enormous factories of purple in Sidon, had bequeathed to her his incomputable riches. She was surrounded by a throng of admirers. By the way she dressed, combed her hair, held herself with irreproachable simplicity, one might have taken her for a woman of ancient Greece, of which but few were left now. But in the irregular features of her face could be seen a fresh Northern blood.

At one period Arsinoë would be infatuated with the sciences, and labour in the Alexandrean Museum under famous savants; she was captivated by the physics of Epicurus, Democritus, Lucretius; their teaching, which freed one from the "fear of the gods," was to her liking. Later, with almost the same feverish and hurried fervency, she gave herself up to sculpture. She had come to Athens to study the best antique examples of Phidias, Scopas and Praxiteles.

"But are ye still harping on grammatics?" the daughter of Helvidius Priscus turned to those conversing, as she entered the hall. "Do not feel constrained,—go right on. I shall not argue,—I want to eat. I worked the whole day through. Boy, pour out the wine."

"My friends," Arsinoë continued, "you are unhappy folk, with your citations from Demosthenes, your rules from Quintillian. Beware,—eloquence shall be your perdition. I am fain to behold, at last, a man who hath no concern with Homer and Cicero, who speaketh without thinking of aspirates and aorists.—Julian, let us go after supper to the sea,—I cannot endure to-day hearing about dactyls and anapests. . . ."

"Thou hast surmised my thought, Arsinoë," mumbled Gargilian, who had over-indulged in goose-liver with saffron sauce,—practically always, toward the end of a supper, together with a heaviness in his stomach he felt an indignation against rhetoric.

"*Litterarum intemperantia laboramus,* as the crafty Seneca, the teacher of Nero, once expressed himself. Yea, therein lies our misfortune! *We suffer from literary intemperance.* We are poisoning our own selves. . . ."

And, falling into a pensive mood, he took out a toothpick of mastic wood. Upon his fat, clever face there appeared an expression of revulsion and ennui.

XIV

JULIAN and Arsinoë descended through an alley of cypresses to the sea. The silvern, moon-lit path receded to the edge of the sky. The surf could be heard surging against the chalky masses of the strand. Here stood a semi-round bench; Artemis the Huntress, standing above it, in a short tunic, a half-moon in her locks, with a bow and quiver, with two sharp-snouted hounds, seemed alive in the moonlight. They sat down.

She pointed out to him the knoll of the Acropolis. with the barely perceptible white shimmer of the Parthenon, and renewed a conversation, which had already more than once occupied them:

"Look,—how splendid! And thou wouldst fain destroy all this, Julian? . . ."

Making no reply, he cast down his eyes.

"I have pondered much upon what thou hast told me last time,—concerning the general meekness of you Christians," Arsinoë went on quietly, as though to herself. "Was Alexander, the son of Philip, meek? Yet was there no virtue in him?"

Julian kept silent.

"And what of Brutus,—Brutus, the assassin of Cæsar? If Brutus had turned his left cheek also, when he had been smitten on the right,—dost thou think he would have been any more splendid? Or do ye deem Brutus a malefactor, ye Galileans?—Why does it seem to me, at

times, that thou dost practice hypocrisy, Julian,—that this dark garb doth not befit thee?"

She suddenly turned upon him her face, lit up by the moon, and looked straight into his eyes with an intense gaze.

"What wouldst thou have, Arsinoë?" he uttered, paling.

"I would that thou wert my enemy!" the girl cried out passionately. "Thou canst not pass by thus, without saying who thou art. Dost thou know, I sometimes think, —'twould be better if Athens and Rome were already lying in ruins; 'tis better to burn a corpse than to leave it uninterred. As for all these friends of ours,—these grammarians, rhetoricians, versifiers, composers of panegyrics for Emperors,—they are but the putrefying corpse of Hellas and of Rome. One is as afraid in their presence as in the presence of the dead. Oh, aye, ye may well triumph, Galileans! Soon there shall remain upon earth naught save dead-men's bones and ruins. And thou too, Julian. . . . Nay, nay! It cannot be. I do not believe that thou art with them,—against me, against Hellas! . . ."

Julian was standing before her, pale and speechless. He wanted to leave. She seized him by the hand:

"Say, say that thou art my enemy!" she cried, challenge and despair in her voice.

"Arsinoë! Wherefore this? . . ."

"Tell me all! I would fain know. For dost thou not feel how near we are to one another? Or dost thou fear? . . ."

"In two days I am leaving Athens," uttered Julian in a whisper. "Forgive me. . . ."

"Leaving Athens? Wherefore? Whither?"

"A letter has come from Constantius. The Emperor summons me to his court,—perchance to my death. It seems to me as if I were seeing thee for the last time."

"Julian, thou dost not believe in Him?" exclaimed Arsinoë, trying to catch the eyes of the monk.

"Soft, soft! What art thou saying? . . ."

He arose from the bench, took a few paces, stepping barely audibly, and looked about him in all directions,—upon the path, flooded with moonlight, upon the black shadows of the bushes, even at the sea, as though informers might be concealed everywhere. Then he returned and sat down, still unassured. Leaning with his hand against the marble, he bent toward her very ear, so that she felt his hot breath, and fell to murmuring, in a rapid whisper, as in a delirium:

"Aye, aye,—I, of all men, not to believe in Him! . . . Hearken, maiden,—I am now telling thee that which I have never dared tell to myself. I hate the Galilean!—But I have been lying ever since I have remembrance of myself. The falsehood has penetrated into my soul, has come to cleave to it even as this black garb cleaves to my body,—thou dost remember the envenomed shirt of the Centaur Nessos. Heracles did tear it away with pieces of his skin and flesh, but did not succeed in tearing it off and suffocated. Even so shall I suffocate in Galilean falsehood! . . ."

He uttered each word with an effort. Arsinoë glanced up at him: his face, distorted with suffering and hatred, seemed to her unfamiliar, almost frightful.

"Calm thyself, friend," she said. "Tell me all, then,—I shall understand thee as no other living being can."

"I fain would tell, and cannot," he smiled, malevolently. "I have kept silent too long. Dost thou see,

Arsinoë,—'tis all over with him who hath once fallen into their paws! These beings, poor in spirit, will so maim him, will teach him to lie and crawl so, that he will nevermore straighten himself up again, nor lift up his head! . . ."

The blood rushed to his face; the veins stood out on his brow; and, clenching his teeth in an impotent fury, he said in a whisper:

" 'Tis baseness, baseness,—a baseness truly Galilean,—to hate one's enemy even as I hate Constantius,—and to forgive, and to crawl about at his feet, in a reptilian, humble, Christian fashion, supplicating his grace: 'One more short year, but one short year of life for thy evil-minded slave, the monk Julian; after that, thy will, and that of the castrates thy counsellors, be done, as ye will, O thou most beloved of God!' Oh, the baseness of it! . . ."

"Nay, Julian," exclaimed Arsinoë, "if this be so, thou shalt yet conquer! Falsehood is thy strength. Dost remember, in the fable of Æsop, the ass in the lion's skin? Here, on the contrary, it is a case of a lion in an ass's skin, a hero in a monk's garb! . . ."

She burst into laughter:

"And how frightened they will become, the simpletons, when thou shalt show the claws of a lion! Then shall there be both laughter and horror! Tell me,—dost thou desire power, Julian?"

"Power!" he wrung his hands, drinking in the sound of this word, breathing in the air with a full chest:

"Power! Oh, for but a year, for a few months, a few days of power,—I would teach these meek, crawling and venomous creatures, who style themselves Christians, the meaning of the wise saying of their own

Teacher: 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's.' [15] Aye, I swear by the god of the Sun, they would render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, had I but my way!"

He lifted up his head; his eyes glittered with malevolence; his face had become radiant, as though it had grown younger. Arsinoë contemplated him with a smile. But shortly Julian's head drooped again. Looking about him in affright, he sank down on the bench; with an involuntary gesture he folded his hands crosswise upon his breast, according to monkish habit, and uttered in a whisper:

"Why deceive one's self? It shall never be. I will perish. Malice will strangle me.—Listen,—every night, after a day passed on my knees in church, over the sepulchres of the Galilean dead, I return home, all broken up, fatigued; I throw myself down on my couch, with my face to its head, and sob. I sob and gnaw the head of my couch, lest I cry out from pain and fury. O, thou dost not know as yet, Arsinoë, the Galilean horror and stench, in which, for twenty years now, I am a-dying and cannot die, because,—dost thou see?—we Christians are tenacious of life, like snakes,—if they cleave us in two, we grow together again! Formerly I sought consolation in the virtue of the theurgists and sages. In vain! Neither virtuous am I, nor wise. I am evil,—and would fain be still more evil, would fain be strong and awesome, like the Devil, my sole brother!—But wherefore, wherefore can I not forget that there is something else, that there is beauty,—wherefore have I ever beheld thee! . . ."

With a sudden gesture, throwing back her beautiful bare arms, Arsinoë entwined his neck, drew him to her so powerfully, so closely, that he felt through her

raiment the immaculate freshness of her body, as she uttered in a whisper:

"But what if I were to come to thee, youth, like a clairvoyant Sibyl, in order to prophesy glory for thee?—Thou art the only living one among the dead. Thou art strong. What doth it matter to me that thou hast not the white wings of a swan, but awesome, black ones,—that thou hast crooked, evil talons, like those of birds of prey?—I love all those spurned,—dost thou hear, Julian?—I love the lonely and proud eagles, more than the white swans. Only, be thou still more mighty, still more evil! Dare to be evil to the end. Lie, nor be ashamed to; 'tis better to lie than to resign one's self. Fear not hatred,—'tis but the tempestuous strength of thy wings. —Wouldst make an alliance with me?—Thou shalt bestow upon me strength, I shall bestow upon thee beauty. . . . Wouldst have it, Julian? . . ."

Through the light folds of the ancient peplum, now anew, as once on the palæstra, he beheld the graceful outlines of the nude body of Artemis the Huntress, and it seemed to him that it was all translucent, tender and aureate, through the æthereal stuff. His head swam. In the lunar murk which enveloped them, he noted her audacious, laughing lips drawing nigh his. For the last time the thought came to him:

"I must go away. She doth not love me, nor will ever come to love me,—she doth but desire power. 'Tis but a deception. . . ." But immediately he added, with an impotent smile:

"Let it e'en be a deception,—let it!"

And the chill of her kiss,—too pure, unslaking, penetrated to the depth of his heart, like the chill of death. It seemed to him that virginal Artemis herself, in the

pellucid twilight of the crescent, had descended and was now kissing him with a deceptive kiss, that was like to the cold light of the moon.

On the following morn both friends—Gregory of Nanzianzen and Basil of Cæsarea,—came upon Julian in a certain Athenian basilica. He was kneeling before an icon and praying. The friends looked upon him with wonder,—never yet had they seen upon his features such resignation, such radiance.

"Brother," whispered Basil in the ear of his friend, "we have sinned,—we have condemned a righteous man in our hearts."

Gregory shook his head:

"May the Lord e'en forgive me if I have erred," he pronounced slowly, without taking his searching gaze off Julian, "only do thou recall, brother Basil, how often in the likeness of the most radiant angels has appeared to men Satan himself, the father of all lies."

XV

On the stand of a dolphin-shaped lamp, were placed irons for the curling of hair. The flame seemed pale, inasmuch as the rays of the morning, striking directly upon the draperies, filled the tiring room with a dense scarlet-violet reflection. The silk of the draperies was dyed in the most expensive of all the varieties of purple,—hyacinthine, Tyrian, dyed thrice.

"Hypostases? Just what the divine Hypostases of the Trinity are, none among men may apprehend. I have not slept a wink all this night and cogitated, inasmuch as I have a most great predilection thereto. But I got naught for all my thinking,—save a headache. Lad, let me have the towel and the soap."

All this was uttered by a man of pompous mien, with a mitre upon his head, who resembled an arch-priest or an Asiatic potentate,—the head tonsorialist to the sacred person of the Emperor Constantius. The razor in his skilled hands flew with an ensorcelled lightness. The barber had the air of consummating a rite of some sacred mystery. On either side, besides Eusebius, the Dignitary of the Most August Bed-chamber, who held greater sway than any other man in the Empire, and in addition to other innumerable chamberlains, or cubicularii, with sundry vessels, unguents, towels and ewers, there stood two adolescents,—bearers of the flabella; during the entire time of the sacred mystery of shaving the beard

they fanned the Emperor with broad, fine flabella in the shape of silvern, six-winged seraphim, made in the semblance of those sacramental *rhipides* wherewith deacons drive away flies from the Holy Eucharist during the liturgy.

The barber had just finished with the right cheek of the Emperor and was commencing upon the left, having first painstakingly lathered it with soap made with a perfume of Araby, which perfume was called the Foam of Aphrodite. He was whispering, bending over the very ear of Constantius, in such a manner that none might hear:

"O Sovereign, Most Beloved of God, thy all-embracing intellect alone can resolve what the three Hypostases —that of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—are. Hearken not to the bishops. Not their will, but thine, be done! Athanasius, the Patriarch of Alexandrea, ought to be executed for a contumacious and blasphemous rebel. God Himself, who is Our Creator, will reveal to Thy Holiness, what and how, precisely, thy slaves ought to believe. In my opinion Arius truly affirmeth that there has been a time when the Son was not. And also, as concerneth Consubstantiality. . . ."

But at this juncture Constantius cast a glance in an enormous mirror of polished silver, and, having fingered the shaven, silky surface of his right cheek, interrupted the barber:

" 'Tis not altogether smooth, 'twould seem? Eh? Canst go over it once more, perchance?—What was it thou wast saying anent Consubstantiality?"

The barber, who had received a golden talent from the court bishops, Ursacius and Valentus, to prepare the Cæsar for a new profession of faith, began rapidly and

insinuatingly whispering in the ear of Constantius, wielding the razor as though caressing him.

At this moment there approached the Emperor the notary Paul, surnamed Catena,—that is, the Chain; he was called the Chain, inasmuch as his fearful informations, like unbreakable links, always entangled his chosen victim. The face of Paul was effeminate, beardless, gentle; to judge by his exterior appearance, one might presuppose in him an angelic meekness; his eyes were dull, black, veiled with languor; his step was inaudible, with a feline grace in his soft motions. Upon his upper mantle, across the shoulder of the notary, was thrown a broad dark blue band or baldrick, a special mark of the Emperor's favour.

Paul Catena, with a soft, imperious motion put the tonsorialist to one side, and, bending toward the ear of Constantius, whispered:

"An epistle from Julian. I managed to intercept it last night. Is it thy pleasure to break the seal?"

Constantius with avidity snatched the letter out of Paul's hands, opened it, and fell to reading it. But he was disenchanted.

" 'Tis trifling," he uttered, "an exercise in eloquence. He is sending, as a present, an hundred dried figs to a learned sophist; he writes a panegyric on dried figs and the number hundred."

" 'Tis a crafty subterfuge, perchance?" remarked Catena.

"Can it be," asked Constantius, "can it be that there are no proofs whatsoever?"

"None whatsoever."

"Either he is very artful, or else . . ."

"What would thy Eternal Self say?"

"Or else he is innocent."

"As thou wilt," whispered Paul.

"As I will?—I would be just,—merely just; dost thou not know that? I need proofs."

"Bide thy time,—proofs there shall be."

Another informer put in his appearance,—a young Persian, by the name of Mercury, by office a court dapifer,—almost a boy; xanthochroous, black-eyed. He was dreaded no less than Catena, and was jocosely styled "The Dignitary of Dream-Visions,"—if the fatidical dream might bear an ill signification for the sacred person of the Cæsar, Mercury, having overheard it, would hasten to lodge information. Many had already paid for having had the indiscretion of seeing in their sleep that which they should not have seen. Courtiers fell to asserting that they were sufferers of incurable insomnia and envied the dwellers in fabled Atlantis, who, according to the assertion of Plato, sleep a dreamless sleep.

The Persian, having thrust aside the two Æthiopian castrates who were tying the laces on the shoes of the Emperor,—embroidered with eagles in gold, and made of leather of a vivid green, a color arrogated only to Most August foot-gear,—fell to embracing the legs of his sovereign, kissing them, and looking up into his eyes, as a dog, fawning and wagging its tail, looks into the eyes of its master.

"May Thy Eternal Self e'en forgive me!" Little Mercury was whispering, with a child-like and simple-hearted fealty. "I could not bear it in patience,—I came running to thee as fast as I could,—Gaudentius has dreamt an evil dream. Thou didst appear to him in torn raiment, in a wreath of barren ears of grain, turned downward."

"What is the significance of that?"

"The ears barren of grain foretell of famine, whereas the torn purple: . . . I durst not . . ."

"Illness?"

"Perchance somewhat worse. The wife of Gaudentius confessed to me that he has consulted augurs,—God knows what they told him. . . ."

" 'Tis well,—we shall talk it over later. Come to me at even."

"Nay, now! Permit torture,—light torture, without fire.—There is also the matter of the tablecloths. . . ."

"What tablecloths?"

"Hast thou forgot? At a certain feast in Aquitania the table was decked with two cloths, bordered with purple so broad that they formed something in the nature of a regal chlamys."

"More than two fingers' breadth? I have by decree allowed borders the width of two fingers."

"O, far wider! A real, I say, Imperial chlamys. Just think of it,—a sacrilegious ornament like that,—on a tablecloth! . . ."

Mercury could hardly manage to utter all the informations that had accumulated.

"In Daphnæ a monster was born," he mumbled, hurrying and stammering. "It hath four ears, four eyes, two tusks, and is all woolly; the soothsayers say that 'tis an ill portent—of the splitting-up of the Holy Empire."

"We shall look into it. Write it all down, in order, and submit it."

The Emperor was concluding his morning tiring. He glanced once more into the mirror, and with a fine little brush caught up a dab of rouge out of a silvern little box of filigree work, an image of a little sepulchre

for holy remains, with a little cross upon its cover,—Constantius was most devout; innumerable enamelled little crosses and monograms of Christ's name could be seen in every corner, on every little bagatelle. This special sort of precious rouge, called *Purpurissima,* was prepared from the rosy foam skimmed from the juice of purple shells, boiling in kettles; Constantius skillfully passed the little brush with this rouge over his swarthy and dry cheeks. From the chamber called *Porphyria,* where in a special five-storied ambry, called a *pentopirgion,* the regal raiment was safeguarded, the eunuchs brought out an Imperial dalmatica,—stiff, almost unbending, heavy with precious stones and gold, with winged lions and serpents broidered on its amethystine purple.

On that day, in the chief hall of the Mediolanian castle, there was to take place an ecclesiastical congress. Thither did the Emperor bend his steps, through a marble way leading directly to it. The palace guards—the palatines—were ranged in two rows, as mute as statues, with their spears—each fourteen ells long—uplifted. Borne aloft by the Dignitary of the Most August Largesses—*Comes Sacrarum Largitionum*—the gold-embroidered banner of Constantine, the Labarum, with the monogram of Christ, glistened and rustled. The guards, The Silent Ones—*Silentiarii,*—ran ahead and, waving their hands, invoked all to a devout silence.

In the gallery the Emperor encountered his spouse, Eusebia Aurelia. She was a woman no longer young, whose face was pale and tired, and with fine and noble features; at times a malicious, scoffing smile would flare up in her penetrating eyes. The Empress, with her hands folded on her omophorion, strewn with rubies and

sapphires facetted in the semblance of hearts, bowed her head and uttered the customary morning salutation:

"I have come to have my sweet fill of contemplating thy face, my spouse, most beloved of God. Has Thy Holiness deigned to sleep well?"

Then, at a sign from her, two court matrons, Euphrosinia and Theophania, who were supporting her arms, withdrew to a short distance, and she said to her spouse, in a low voice:

"Julian is to present himself before thee to-day. Be thou gracious to him. Trust not the informers. He is but an unhappy and innocent youth. The Lord shall reward thee if thou wilt have pity upon him, liege lord!"

"Art thou interceding for him?"

Husband and wife exchanged rapid glances.

"I know," she spake, "thou hast ever put thy trust in me,—trust me this once as well. Julian is thy faithful slave. Deny him not; be kind to him. . . ."

She bestowed upon her husband one of those smiles which still retained their sway over his heart.

In a portico, separated from the main hall by a hanging rug, behind which the Emperor was fond of eavesdropping whatever took place at the councils, he was approached by a monk whose head bore a small cruciform tonsure, in a cowled tunic of coarse, dark stuff. This was Julian.

He bowed his knees before Constantius, cast himself on the ground, and, having kissed the hem of the Emperor's dalmatica, spake:

"Greetings to my benefactor, the victorious, great, eternal Cæsar, Augustus Constantius. May Thy Holiness have mercy upon me!"

"We are glad to see thee, our son."

Julian's cousin graciously drew his hand near to the monk's very lips. Julian touched this hand, upon which was the blood of his father, his brother,—of all his kin.

The monk arose, pale, with burning eyes fixed upon his enemy. He was clenching the handle of a dagger, concealed under the folds of his raiment. The small, leaden-grey eyes of Constantius had in them the light of vainglorious ambition, and it was only at rare intervals that a crafty caution would flare up in them. He was small of stature, a head lower than Julian; broad-shouldered, apparently strong and sturdy, but with legs that were hideously bowed, like those of old horsemen; the swarthy skin over his smooth temples and cheek-bones had an unpleasant gloss; his thin lips were sternly compressed, like those of men who love above all else in life order and precision,—an expression such as is found in old school-teachers. To Julian all this seemed hateful. He felt a blind, brute fury possessing him; powerless to utter a single word, he cast down his eyes and breathed heavily. Constantius smiled tolerantly, thinking that the youth had not been able to withstand his regal gaze,—that he was abashed by the unearthly majesty of the Roman Cæsar. He uttered, floridly and graciously:

"Fear not, youth! Go thy way in peace. Our loving-kindness shall cause thee no hurt, and in the future shall not leave thy orphanhood without benefactions."

Julian entered the hall of the ecclesiastical council; while the Emperor took his stand near the very rug, applying his ear thereto, and with a crafty, mocking smile fell to eager eavesdropping. He recognised the voice

of the head official of the Imperial post, Gaudentius,—the very same who had had the evil dream.

"Council upon council!" Gaudentius was complaining to some patrician. "Now in Sirmium, now in Sardica, now in Antioch, or in Constantinople. They dispute, but can come to no agreement as to Consubstantiality. But, at the same time, the post-horses ought to be spared! The bishops dash along, at break-neck speed, with official convoys. Back and forth, now from the East, now from the West. And behind them is a whole cloud of presbyters, deacons, church officiators, scribes. 'Tis ruination! Out of ten post-nags there is scarce to be found one that has not been reduced to a bag of bones by the bishops. Five congresses more,—and all my horses will drop dead, while the wheels will fall off the governmental conveyances. And, mark thou,—the bishops will still never come to an agreement as to the Hypostases and Consubstantiality!"

"Wherefore then, most illustrious Gaudentius, dost thou not compose a report of this to the Cæsar?"

"I fear me I will not be believed, and will be accused of impiety, of disrespect for the needs of the Church."

In the enormous circular hall, with round vaulting and pillars of greenish-veined Phrygian marble, it was stuffy. Oblique rays fell through the windows situated under the vaulting. The hubbub of the voices reminded one of the hum of a beehive.

On a dais stood in readiness the Emperor's throne, the *sella aurea,* with lion paws of ivory, which were crossed, like those upon the curule faldstools of the consuls of Ancient Rome. Near the throne the presbyter Paphnutius, a man of simple-hearted visage, which had grown heated from dispute, was asseverating:

"I, Paphnutius, e'en as I have imbibed the matter from the Fathers, so shall I e'en maintain it in my thoughts! According to the symbol, the creed, that is given in the holy words of our holy Father Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandrea, we must render worship and adoration to the One in the Trinity, and the Trinity in the One. The Father is God,—the Son is God,—the Holy Ghost is God; howsoever, there be not three Gods, but One!"

And, as though overwhelming his unseen enemy, he with all his might smote the palm of his left hand with the enormous fist of his right, and surveyed all present with a triumphant glance:

"E'en as I have imbibed the matter, so shall I maintain it in my thoughts!"

"Eh? What? What is he saying now?" Osius was asking,—a centenarian ancient, a contemporary of the great Council of Nicæa. "Where is my trumpet?"

His face bore an expression of helpless wonder. He was deaf, well-nigh blind, and had a long grey beard. A deacon put an ear-trumpet to the ear of the old man.

A pale and most thin little monk, a keeper of fasts, was clutching with an imploring air at the alb of Paphnutius:

"Father Paphnutius!" he was trying to outshout him. "What is all this, now? Because of a single word, all because of a single word,—whether the substance be *similar* or *identical!*" And, catching at the clothing of Paphnutius, the monk told him of the horrors which he had witnessed in Alexandrea and Constantinople. The Arians pry open the mouths of those who do not want to partake of the Holy Host in the heretical church with wooden appliances, consisting of two wooden sticks,

joined in the semblance of a boar-spear, and put the Eucharist in by force; children are tortured; the nipples of women are crushed in vises or burned out with red-hot iron; in the Church of the Holy Apostles had taken place such a mêlée between the orthodox Christians and the Arians that the blood had filled a rain cistern, and from the steps of the parvis had poured down into the square; in Alexandrea the governor, Sebastian, had flogged with prickly palm branches the orthodox Christian virgins, so that many died, and the uninterred, dishonoured bodies lay before the city gates.—And all this not merely because of even a single word, but merely because of a single letter, because of a single *iota*, which differentiated the Greek word *identical in substance*, *ὁμοούσιος*, from *similar in substance*, *ὁμοιούσιος*.

"Father Paphnutius," the meek pale monk kept to his point, "all because of a single *iota!* And, most important of all, there is not in all of the Holy Writ, now, any such word even as *ousia*,—being, or substance. What, then, are we disputing over and tormenting one another for? Reflect, father, how horrible such ill-naturedness of ours is! . . ."

"Well, what of it?" Paphnutius cut him short impatiently. "Are we, then, to make our peace with the accursed blasphemers, hounds who have spewed out of their heretical hearts the idea that there has ever been a time when the Son was not?"

"One Shepherd, one flock," the monk timidly defended himself. "Let us concede . . ."

But Paphnutius was not listening to him. He bellowed so that the veins stood out on his neck and temples, covered with beads of sweat.

"May the haters of God be stilled! May this never be,

—aye, never! I anathemate this abominable Arian heresy! E'en as I have imbibed the matter from the Fathers, so shall I maintain it in my thoughts!"

The centenarian Osius approvingly and helplessly nodded his grey head.

" 'Twould seem thou hast grown somewhat quiet,—eh, abba Dorotheus? Art disputing but little to-day? Or hast gotten a bit wearied?" Fabius, a tall, pale and handsome presbyter, with wavy, unusually long hair, as black as pitch, was asking of a jaundiced, spry little old man.

"I have grown hoarse, brother Fabius. I fain would speak, but have no voice wherewith. I strained my throat the other day, when we were overthrowing the cursed Acacians,—'tis the second day now I am going about hoarse."

"Thou, father, ought to gargle thy throat with a raw egg,—'twould ease up considerably."

Ætius, deacon of Antioch, the most extreme of the disciples of Arius,—he was called godless—an atheist—for his sacrilegious expounding of the Holy Trinity,—was holding a disputation at the other extreme of the hall. His face was gay and scoffing. The life of Ætius was distinguished by diversity,—he had been, by turns, a slave, a coppersmith, a day labourer, a rhetorician, a leech, a disciple of the Alexandrean philosophers, and, finally, had become a deacon.

"God the Father is in substance foreign to God the Son," preached Ætius, taking delight in the horror of his auditors. "There is a Trinity. But the Hypostases have distinguishing gradation in their glory. 'God' is not used in speaking of the Son, inasmuch as it is not stated that He is an Entity unto Himself. Even the Son knoweth

not His own substance, or nature, inasmuch as to Him that hath a beginning it is impossible to imagine or mentally embrace Him that is without Beginning."

"Blaspheme not!" in indignation exclaimed Theona, Bishop of Marmarica. "How long, my brethren, will the Satanic impudence of these heretics endure?"

"Do not, with thy sweet-sounding speech," added didactically Sophronius, Bishop of Pompeopolis, "lead the simple-minded into erring ways."

"Point out to me any philosophical arguments,—and I shall agree. But yells and oaths prove naught but impotence," retorted Ætius calmly.

"It is said in the Scripture—" Sophronius was about to begin.

"What have I to do with the Scripture? God hath given reason unto men, that they might arrive at a comprehension of Him. I believe in dialectics, but not in the letter of the Scripture. Discourse with me in adherence with the categories and syllogisms of Aristotle." And with a contemptuous smile he wrapped himself up in his deaconal alb, as Diogenes might have done in his cynic's toga.

Certain bishops were already beginning to arrive at a general profession of faith, making concessions to one another, when suddenly an Arian intervened in their discussion—he was Narcissus of Neroniada, a man well versed in all œcumenical statutes, symbols or creeds, and canons,—a man who was disliked, accused of lechery and simony, but nevertheless respected for his learning.

"Heresy!" he announced to the bishops, succinctly and imperturbably.

"What heresy? Wherefore heresy?" queried several voices.

"This was declared heresy as far back as the Council of Gangre in Paphlagonia."

Narcissus had small, strabismic eyes, sparkling with a malicious glitter; the same malicious and wry smile was upon his thin lips; his hair, sprinkled with grey, was coarse, like bristles; all his features seemed to be distorted by malice.

"At Gangre, in Paphlagonia!" the bishops echoed in despair. "And here we had gone and forgot all about this Council. What to do, brethren?"

Narcissus, taking them all in with his squint-eyes, was gloating.

"Lord, have mercy upon us sinners!" Eusoius, a kind and simple-hearted bishop, kept on exclaiming. "I comprehend naught. I am all in a muddle. My head is spinning round and round, what with *ὁμοούσιος*, *ὁμοιούσιος*, consubstantial, unconsubstantial, similitudes, Hypostases, —there is a ringing in my ears from the Greek words, I walk as in a fog, and know not myself what I believe, what I do not believe,—wherein is heresy, wherein heresy is not. Lord Jesus Christ, help Thou us! We perish in the toils of the Devil!"

At this moment the noise and the shouts died down. One of the court favourites mounted on the ambo,—the Bishop Ursacius of Singidunium; in his hand he was holding a long parchment charter. Two logographers, with open volumes before them, got ready to record the disputations of the council, having sharpened their thin pens of calamus, an Ægyptian reed. Ursacius read aloud the manifest of the Emperor, addressed to the bishops.

"Constantius, Conqueror, Triumphator, the Most

Honoured and Eternal Augustus, to all the Bishops convened in Mediolanum,—Greetings."

He demanded from the Council the deposing of Athanasius, the patriarch of Alexandrea, in coarse and unseemly terms; he styled this ancient, revered of all and saintly, "the most worthless of men, a traitor, a fellow-conspirator of the rebellious and vile Maxentius." The court sycophants,—Valentius, Eusebius, Axentius, —began signing the charter. But a murmur arose in the crowd:

"'Tis an accursed beguilement, the free-thinking crafty devices of the Arian Anti-Christians! We shall not let the patriarch come to any hurt!"

"The Cæsar styles himself *Eternal*. None is eternal save God! 'Tis blasphemy!"

The last words were distinctly heard by Constantius, ensconced behind the rug. Suddenly he jerked away the hanging and set foot in the hall where the Council sat. The spear-bearers surrounded him. The face of the Emperor was wrathful. There fell a silence.

"What is it? What is it?" the blind ancient Osius kept on repeating; bewilderment and alarm were upon his face.

"Holy Fathers!" began the Emperor, restraining his wrath. "Permit me, a servant of the All-Beneficent, to carry out my zeal, under His Providence, to the end. Athanasius, the rebel, is the prime disturber of the peace of all creation. . . ."

Again a murmur arose in the throng. Constantius fell silent, and with astonishment let his eyes rove over the bishops. Some one's voice uttered:

"We anathematize the vile Arian heresy!"

"The faith against which ye are rising up," retorted

the Emperor, "is Our faith. If it be heretical,—wherefore, then, hath the sovereign Lord granted us victory over all our arch enemies,—Constans, Vetranio, Gallus, the rebellious and vile Maxentius? Wherefore hath God himself placed in our sacred right hand the sovereignty of the universe?"

The fathers were speechless. Thereupon the court toady, Valentius, the Bishop of Mursa, bent forward with a fawning meekness:

"God shall reveal the truth to Thy wisdom, O Sovereign Most Beloved of God! That in which thou believest can not be heresy. Not in vain did Cyrillus of Jerusalem behold a thaumaturgic portent in the sky on the day of thy victory over Maxentius,—a cross, surrounded with a rainbow."

"Such is my will!" Constantius cut him short, arising. "Athanasius shall be deposed through the power vested in us by God. Pray, so that all the dissensions and wordy contentions may cease at last; that there may be an annihilation of the infamous and homicidal heresy of the Sabellians,—the adherents of the most worthless Athanasius; that the truth may shine forth in the hearts of all. . . ."

Suddenly his face blanched; the words died away on his lips.

"What is this? How was he admitted? . . ."

Constantius was pointing to a tall old man, austere and majestic of face,—this was Hilarion, Bishop of Pictaria, persecuted and deposed for his faith, one of the bitterest enemies of the Arian Emperor. He had of his own will come to the council, thinking, perchance, to find a martyr's death. The old man raised his arms towards heaven, as though invoking a curse upon the

head of the Emperor, and his loud voice rang forth amid the silence of the council.

"Brethren, 'tis Christ that is coming, inasmuch as Antichrist hath already conquered. That Antichrist is Constantius! 'Tis not our spines that he smites, but our bellies that he caresseth; 'tis not in dungeons that he doth cast us, but he seduceth us in kingly mansions.—Hearken, Cæsar,—I say unto thee that which I would have said unto Nero, Decius, Maximian,—all open persecutors of the Church: thou art a murderer not of men, but of the very Love Divine! Nero, Decius, Maximian did serve God more than thou dost,—in their reigns we vanquished the devil; in their reigns was poured out the blood of the martyrs, which purified the earth, and dead bones did work miracles! But thou, most ferociously cruel, slayest, yet dost not give us the glory of death!—Lord, send us an open torturer, an unhypocritical foe, like to Nero and Decius, so that the beneficent and fearful weapon of Thy wrath resurrect the Church, made corrupt by the kisses of Judas-Constantius! . . ."

The Emperor raised his arm in fury:

"Seize,—seize him, and the rebels!" he uttered, gasping and pointing to Hilarion.

The palatines and the shield-bearers threw themselves upon the bishops. Confusion sprang up. Swords flashed out. Hilarion, with coarse insults, was dragged off by warriors, who tore off his omophorion, stole and chasuble. Many, in horror, dashing to the doors, fell, or crushed and trampled one another.

One of the logographers, a youth, jumped up on a window-sill, desiring to jump out into the court, but a warrior clutched at his garment and held him back.

The table and the ink-wells were overturned, and the red ink spread over the floor of blue jasper. At the sight of this scarlet pool the cry went up:

"Blood! Blood! Fly!"

Others vociferated:

"Death to the enemies of the most pious Augustus!"

Paphnutius, drawn along by two legionaries, was proclaiming in a thunderous voice:

"I recognise the Council of Nicæa—I anathematize the heresy of the Arians!"

Many kept on shouting:

"Consubstantial!"

Others:

"May it never be! Similar-substantial!"

Others still:

"Dissimilar,—that is to say, *anomœan, anomœan!*" "Be still, ye haters of God!" "Anathema!" "May it be cast down!" "The Council of Nicæa!" "The Council of Sardica!" "That of Gangre in Paphlagonia!" "Anathema!"

The blind Osius sat on immovable, forgotten of all, in his place of honour, the episcopal chair, and was whispering, barely audibly:

"Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us! Whatever is this, brethren? . . ."

But in vain did he stretch forth his weak hands towards the men grown mad; in vain did he reiterate: "Brethren, brethren,—whatever is this?"—none saw and none heard the old man. And the tears coursed down his centenarian wrinkles.

Julian was contemplating the council with a malevolent sneer and gloated in silence.

. . . . . .

On the same day, late in the evening, in the desolate silence, in the middle of a green plain, to the East of Mediolanium, two anchorites from Mesopotamia, who had been sent as delegates to the Council by distant Syrian bishops, were travelling a-foot.

They had barely contrived to save themselves from the hands of the court guards, and were now joyously bending their steps towards Ravenna, that they might as soon as possible board a ship and return to their desert. Their faces bore an expression of fatigue and despondence. One of them, Ephraim, was an old man; the other, Pimenus, was a youth. Said Ephraim to Pimenus:

" 'Tis high time for the desert, brother of mine. 'Tis better to hear the howling of jackals and lions than that which we have this day heard in kingly mansions. O my sweet child! Blessed are the silent. Blessed are they that have put about them a wall of desert silence, from beyond which there will not float in to them the disputes of the teachers of the Church. Blessed are they who have comprehended the insignificance of words. Blessed are they that do not dispute. Blessed is he who doth not experience the mysteries of God, but who yet singeth before thy face, O Lord, like to a lyre. Blessed is he who hath attained knowledge of how difficult it is to know, how sweet it is to love, Thee, Lord!"

Ephraim fell into silence, and Pimenus uttered an "Amen!"

The great quiet of night embraced them. And sturdily, guiding themselves by the stars, they set their steps towards the East, rejoicing in the silence of the desert.

XVI

On a sunny morning, through all the streets of Mediolan, the populace streamed in throngs towards the main square.

There broke forth a rumble of acclamations,—and, in a triumphal chariot, harnessed to a great team of horses white as swans, the Emperor appeared. He stood on such a height that the people below had to crane their necks to see him. His raiment, strewn over with precious stones, blazed blindingly. In his right hand he held the sceptre, in his left the Imperial globe, surmounted by a cross. Motionless, like a statue, with much rouge and whitening upon him, he looked straight ahead of him, without turning his head, as though it were squeezed in a vise. During the entire duration of the journey, even at the jolts and shakes of the chariot, he had not made a single move,—had not stirred a finger, nor coughed, nor blinked an eye. This petrified immobility Constantius had attained through the efforts of many years, taking pride therein and deeming it an indispensable mark of the divine greatness of Roman emperors. At such moments he would have consented to die, rather than, betraying mortal nature, to mop the sweat off his face, sneeze, blow his nose, or spit.

Bandy-legged, small of stature, he seemed a very Titan in his own eyes. When the chariot was entering under the arch of the Triumphal Gates, not far from the thermæ of Maximian Hercules, he inclined his head, as

though to avoid striking it against the top of the gates, although Cyclops himself might have gone through freely.

On both sides of the way palatines were stationed. Their helmets were of gold, and their breastplates also; in the sun the two files of the guard of honour flashed, like twin lightnings. Around the Imperial chariot waved magnificent standards in the form of dragons. The purple stuff, bellying in the wind that rushed in at the open maws of the dragons, gave forth a piercing whistle, like to the hissing of serpents, while the long, scarlet tails of the monsters swirled in the breeze. All the legions stationed at Mediolanium were collected in the square.

The thunder of the greetings met the Emperor. Constantius was content,—the very pitch of these greetings, not too faint, not too powerful, was determined beforehand and subject to the strictest regulation; the soldiers and the citizens were taught the art of shouting in rapture with moderation and reverence. Bestowing upon his every move, his every step, an exaggerated pomp, the Emperor descended from the chariot and mounted a platform rearing above the square, behung from top to bottom with the victorious tatters of ancient banners and brazen Roman eagles. Again the blare of trumpets pealed forth,—the signal of the commander's desire to address his troops,—and silence reigned on the square.

"*Optimi reipublicæ defensores!*" Constantius began, "Most excellent defenders of the republic!" His speech was drawn out and overflowing with the flowers of a school-boyish eloquence.

Julian, in court array, ascended the steps of the platform,—and the fratricide enveloped the last scion of the house of Constantius Chlorus with the sacred *porphyra*,—

the purple of the Cæsars. The rays of the sun penetrated through the light silk at the moment that the Emperor was lifting up the purple, in order to lay it upon the genuant Julian,—and the sanguinary reflection fell upon the face of the new Cæsar, covered with a deathly pallor. Mentally he repeated a line of the *Iliad* which to him seemed a prophecy:

" Ἔλλαβε πορφυρεὸς θανατὸς καὶ Μοῖρα κραταίη."
"Eyes closed by purple death and the mighty Mœræ."

But in the meanwhile Constantius was hailing him:

"*Recepisti primævus originis tuæ splendidum florem, amatissime mihi omnium frater.* Though still so young, thou art already receiving the splendid flower of thy regal lineage, my most beloved brother."

Whereupon from all the legions there arose a shout of delight. Constantius frowned,—the cry had exceeded the designated degree: probably the face of Julian had proved to the liking of the warriors.

"Long live Cæsar Julian!" they shouted, ever louder and louder, and would not quiet down. The new Cæsar responded to them with a fraternal smile. Each of the legionaries was smiting his brazen shield against his knee, which constituted a mark of rejoicing. Julian felt that it was not the will of the ruling Cæsar, but of the very gods, which was being fulfilled in his instance. . . .

. . . . . .

Every evening Constantius was wont to dedicate a quarter of an hour to the trimming and polishing of his nails; this was the sole diversion which he, a man unpampered, temperate, and rather coarse than delicate in all his habits, would permit himself. Trimming his nails

with fine little files, smoothing them with little brushes, he asked with a gay air his favourite eunuch, on duty that evening,—Eusebius, the dignitary of the Most August Bed-chamber:

"How doth it seem to thee,—will he conquer the Gauls speedily?"

"It seems to me," answered Eusebius, "that we shall soon receive news of the overwhelming defeats and the death of Julian."

"I would feel very sorry," continued Constantius. "However, I have done all I could,—he will now have no one but himself to blame. . . ."

He smiled, and, with head inclined to one side, glanced at his sharpened nails.

"Thou hast vanquished Maxentius," said the eunuch in a whisper, "vanquished Vetranio, Constans, Gallus,—and thou shalt conquer Julian as well. Then shall there be a single shepherd and a single flock. God,—and thou!"

"Aye, aye. . . . But, beside Julian, there is Athanasius. I shall not rest until, alive or dead, he shall be in my hands."

"Julian is more to be dreaded than Athanasius, yet thou hast this day clad him in the purple of death.—O, the wisdom of God's Providence! How it doth cast down in ways incomprehensible all the foes of Thy Eternal Self! Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, now and forever, time without end!"

"Amen!" concluded the Emperor, having finished with his nails, and casting down the last little brush.

He walked up to an ancient Constantinian Banner,—the Labarum, always standing in the bed-chamber of the Cæsar; sank down before it on his knees, and, gazing at the monogram of Christ, composed of precious stones,

and all a-glitter in the light of the never-extinguished lamp, fell to praying. He read through the set prayers and performed the designated number of bows to the ground. He addressed himself to God with imperturbable faith, as is the habit of men who have no doubt of their probity.

When the customary three-quarters of an hour of evening prayer were over, he arose with a light heart. The eunuchs disrobed him. He lay down on his majestic couch, which was supported by silvern seraphim with outstretched wings. The Emperor fell asleep with a smile of innocence on his lips.

XVII

In Athens, in one of the much-frequented porticoes, was exhibited a sculpture of Arsinoë's,—*Octavius, Victor, with the Decapitated Head of Brutus.* The Athenians hailed the daughter of senator Helvidius Priscus as a revivor of ancient art.

Special officials, bound to watch in secret the popular state of mind in the Empire, who had received the frank name of the *Inquisitors,* had lodged information in the proper quarters that this sculpture was capable of inciting in the populace an emotional love of liberty,—in the head of Brutus they found a resemblance to the head of Julian, and saw in this a criminal hint at the recent execution of Gallus; in Octavius they sought to find a resemblance to Constantius. The matter developed into a whole investigation as to *læsa majestas,* and barely escaped falling into the hands of Paulus Catena. Fortunately, from the court chancery of the chief magistrate a most strict order was received not only to carry the statue out of the portico, but also to destroy it, in the presence of Imperial officials.

Arsinoë wanted to secrete it. Hortensius was in such a fright that he threatened to betray his ward to the informers. Overcome by repugnance for human baseness, she allowed everything to be done to her creation that Hortensius desired. The statue was broken up by masons. Arsinoë hurriedly left Athens. Her guardian persuaded her to accompany him to Rome, where his

friends had long been promising him the advantageous post of Imperial quæstor.

They settled down not far from the Palatine Hill. The days went by in inactivity. The artist comprehended that her art could not be great and free, as of yore. Arsinoë remembered her conversation with Julian in Athens,—this was the sole tie that bound her with life. Expectation in inactivity seemed to her unendurable. In her moments of despair she felt a desire to put an immediate end to everything, to abandon it all, and to journey to Gallia without delay, where the youthful Cæsar was,—to attain power with him, or to perish.

But at this juncture she fell seriously ill. During the long, calm days of convalescence, she was soothed and consoled by the most inconstant—and the most steadfast —of her admirers,—Anatolius, a centurion of the court shield-bearers, son of a rich Rhodesian merchant. He was a Roman centurion, as he himself put it, only through a misunderstanding; he had gone into military service to satisfy an ambitious quirk of his father, who deemed it the pinnacle of felicity to see his son in the golden accoutrements of a court shield-bearer. Buying himself off from actual duty by bribes, Anatolius spent his life in elegant leisure, amid books and rare productions of art, in banqueting, and in indolent and luxurious travelling. But that profound clarity of soul, which was the portion of former Epicureans, he no longer was possessed of. He complained to his friends:

"I am ill with a deathly ailment."

"Which?" they would ask him with a smile of incredulity.

"That which you style my wit, and what to my own self seems at times a lamentable and strange madness."

In his excessively soft, muliebrile features there was an expression of weariness and indolence. At times he would seem to awaken,—now he would undertake, during a tempest, a purposeless, dangerous outing on the open sea, accompanying the fishermen; or go off into Calabria for boar sticking and bear hunting; he would dream of participation in a conspiracy against the life of the Cæsar, or of military exploits; he sought initiation into the mysteries of Mithra and Adonais. At such moments he was capable of astounding, with his indefatigability and daring, even men who knew naught of his customary mode of life. But the exaltation would soon pass off, and he would return to his leisure, more wilted and somnolent, more sad and mocking, than ever before.

"There is naught to be done with thee, Anatolius," Arsinoë would say to him, with a kindly reproachfulness, "thou art all soft, just as if thy bones were lacking."

But at the same time she sensed in the nature of this last of the Epicureans a Hellenic charm; she loved the sad smile in his weary eyes,—a smile of mockery at all that life held and at his own self,—when he would say:

"The sage knows how to find a moiety of sweetness in his saddest thoughts, like to the bees of Hymettus, that, out of the most bitter grasses, extract honey."

His quiet conversations lulled and consoled Arsinoë. She called him, in jest, her physician. Arsinoë got well, but she no more returned to her workroom,—the very sight of marble called forth an oppressive feeling in her.

At this period Hortensius was arranging for the populace, to signalise his arrival at Rome, magnificent

games in the amphitheatre of Flavius. He was constantly undertaking journeys and was full of cares,—receiving every day from different countries of the world steeds, lions, and Beræan bears, Caledonian hounds, Nilous crocodiles, fearless hunters, skilled equestrians, mimes, picked gladiators. The day of the festival was drawing nigh, but the lions from Tarentum, whither they had been brought by sea, had not yet been delivered. The bears came,—emaciated, famished, and as meek as sheep. Hortensius did not sleep of nights from perturbation. Within two days the Saxon gladiators, men proud and beyond fear, for whom he had paid enormous moneys, had, to the great indignation of the senator, strangled each other in their prison, in the night, deeming it ignominy to furnish amusement for the Roman rabble. Hortensius, at these unexpected tidings, almost lost consciousness. Now all his hopes were pinned on the crocodiles.

"Hast thou tried to give them the chopped flesh of swine?" he questioned the slave assigned to the precious crocodiles.

"I have given it them. They eat it not."

"And what of raw veal?"

"They will not eat veal as well."

"And what of wheaten bread, soaked in cream?"

"They will not give it even as much as a sniff. They turn away their snouts and sleep. Must be ailing, or too languid. We have already pried their jaws apart with poles, shoving in the food by force,—they spew it out."

"I swear, by Jupiter, these vile creatures will be the death both of themselves and me! Let them into the arena on the very first day, or else they may e'en up and die from hunger," groaned poor Hortensius, slumping into a chair.

Arsinoë contemplated him not without a certain envy, —he, at any rate, was not bored.

She passed through into a withdrawn chamber, the windows of which looked out on a garden. Here, in the soft moonlight, her sixteen-year-old sister Myrrha, a thin, graceful little girl, was plucking the strings of a lyre. In the silence of the moonlit night the sounds fell like tears. Arsinoë, in silence, embraced her sister. Myrrha, without ceasing to play, responded to her with a smile.

A whistle came from beyond the garden wall.

"'Tis he!" said Myrrha, standing up and listening. "Quick, let us go!"

She tightly clapsed the hand of Arsinoë with her child-like yet powerful hand. Both girls threw on dark mantles and went out. The wind was driving the clouds along, the moon now peeping out, now hiding behind them. Arsinoë opened a small wicket in the garden wall. They were met by a youth, enveloped in the woolen casula of a monk.

"Are we not too late, Juventinus?" asked Myrrha. "I was so afraid thou wouldst not come. . . ."

They walked for a long while, at first through a narrow and dark lane, then through a vineyard, and finally came out on a bare field,—the beginning of the Roman Campagna. The dry burdock rustled. In the moonlit distance one could see the arches of the brick aqueduct, built in the time of Servius Tullius. Juventinus turned around and uttered:

"Some one is coming."

Both girls also turned around. The light of the moon fell on their faces, and the man following them cried out with joy:

"Arsinoë! Myrrha! I have found you at last! Whither are ye bound?"

"To the Christians," replied Arsinoë. "Come thou with us, Anatolius. Thou shalt see much that is curious."

"To the Christians? It cannot be. . . . Thou hast always hated them so, 'twould seem?" the centurion voiced his amazement.

"With the years, my friend, one grows kinder and more indifferent towards everything," retorted the girl. "This superstition is neither better nor worse than the others. And then, too, what will one not do because of ennui?—I go to them because of Myrrha. She likes them. . . ."

"Where is their church, then? Are we not in a vacant field?" asked Anatolius, looking about him with wonder.

"The churches of the Christians are defiled or demolished by their own brethren, the Arians, who believe in Christ differently than the others. At court thou must have had thy fill of listening about consubstantiality and similar-substantiality. Now the opponents of the Arians pray in secret in the same subterranes as during the time of the first persecutions."

Myrrha and Juventinus had fallen back a little, so that Anatolius and Arsinoë could speak alone.

"Who is this?" asked Anatolius, indicating Juventinus.

"A scion of the ancient line of the Furii," replied Arsinoë. "His mother would fain make a consul of him, whereas he dreams of retreating, against her will, into a desert, that he might pray to God. . . . He loves his mother,—and hides from her as from an enemy."

"The scions of the Furii—monks! O time!" sighed the Epicurean.

At this juncture they approached the arenaria,—ancient quarries of friable tufa,—and descended by narrow steps to the very bottom of the stone-quarry. The moon illumined the reddish masses of volcanic earth. Juventinus took out of a semi-circular depression in the wall a small clay lamp with a handle, struck a fire, and lit it. The long, flickering flame flared up in the lamp's pointed little neck, in which a wick was floating. They went deep into one of the side passages of the arenarium. Dug as far back as the time of the ancient Romans, very broad and spacious, it descended into the depths, by a rather steep incline. It was traversed by other subterranean ways, which had served the workmen for the transportation of the tufa.

Juventinus led his fair companions down the labyrinth. At last he halted before a well, and took off its wooden cover. There was an odour of dankness. They cautiously went down the steep steps. At the very bottom there was a small door. Juventinus knocked thereon. The door opened, and a grey-haired monk, the keeper of the gates, admitted them into a narrow and lofty subterranean passage, no longer dug in the friable, but in the grained tufa, sufficiently porous, however, for the convenient excavation of galleries. Both walls were covered from the ground to the ceiling with the marble plates, or the thin, flat tiles, with which the countless graves were sealed up.

Occasionally they came upon people bearing lamps. In the glimmering light Anatolius, pausing for a minute, read an inscription, carved on one of the plates: "Dorotheus, son of Felix, is at rest in a place cool, in a place

radiant, in a place peaceful,—*requiescit in loco refrigii, luminix, pacis*"; on another plate he read: "Brethren, disturb not my most sweet slumber."

The tenor of these inscriptions was one of love and joy. "Sophronia," proclaimed one of them, "most sweet, mayst thou have eternal life in God,—*Sophronia dulcis, semper vivis Deo,*" and a little farther: "*Sophronia, vivis,* —"Sophronia, thou livest,"—as though the writer had fully comprehended that there is no death. Nowhere was it said: "He is interred," but merely "He is laid here,"—"*depositus.*" It seemed as if thousands upon thousands of men and women, generations upon generations, were lying here, not dead, but fallen into a light slumber, filled with mysterious expectancy.

In the depressions in the walls stood lamps, burning with an unmoving, long flame in the close air, and handsome amphoræ filled with fragrances. It was only the odour of decaying bones, escaping from the crevices of the graves, that recalled death.

The subterranean passages extended for several tiers, going constantly lower and lower. Here and there in the ceiling one could see the wide opening of an air-vent,—a *luminarium*—giving out on the Campagna. Occasionally a feeble ray of moonlight, gliding in through the luminarium, would cast its glow upon a marble slab with an inscription. At the termination of a certain passage they caught sight of a grave digger at work. With a cheerful mien, humming, he was driving his iron pick-axe into the grained tufa, which was becoming round and assuming the semblance of a vault over his head.

About the head overseer of the grave diggers,—the *fossor,* a man in magnificent raiment, with a crafty and obese face,—were grouped several Christians. The fossor,

having inherited a whole gallery of catacombs, had the right to cede for money the vacant places for burials, in the district belonging to him. The district was a very profitable one, inasmuch as here reposed the remains of St. Laurentius. The undertaker had amassed a competence for himself. Now he was higgling with the rich and miserly tanner, Simon. Arsinoë stopped for a moment, listening.

"But is this place far from St. Laurentius?" Simon was asking mistrustfully, thinking of the enormous sum demanded by the fossor.

"Not far,—a matter of six ells."

"Above or below?" the buyer would not down.

"To the right, to the right, a bit on the slant,—so. I am telling thee the place is excellent,—I am not overcharging thee. No matter how much thou hast sinned, 'twill all be remitted to thee! Thus thou wilt enter with the blessed saints straight into the kingdom of Heaven."

And the fossor with an accustomed hand fell to taking his measure for a grave, like a tailor for a garment. The tanner persuasively urged to arrange him as roomily as possible, that he might not lie cramped. At this juncture there walked up to the undertaker a poorly dressed little crone:

"What wilt thou have, gammer?"

"I have brought the money,—the extra sum."

"What extra sum?"

"For a straight grave."

"Ah, I remember. Well, how is it thou dost not want to be in a crooked one?"

"I do not want it, father,—e'en now my bones ache enough without that. . . ."

In the catacombs, especially near to the remains of

saints, every free nook was so highly prized that it was necessary to arrange graves somewhat awry, where the disposition of the walls did not permit of other arrangements; the crooked graves were bought only by the poor.

"God knows, thinks I, how long one has to lay till Resurrection," exclaimed the little crone. "True, one will fit into a crooked one, at first, and it matters naught, but later, when one gets tired,—'twill go ill. . . ."

Anatolius listened and was enraptured:

"This is far more curious than the mysteries of Mithra," he assured Arsinoë," with a frivolous smile. " 'Tis a pity I knew not of this before. Never have I seen a gayer cemetery!"

They set foot within a rather large crypt. Here countless lamps were burning. A presbyter was performing mass. The altar was the upper slab of the sepulchre of a martyr, which was situated under a groined arch. There were many praying, in long white garments. All the faces seemed joyous.

Myrrha sank on her knees. She was gazing with tears of child-like love at the depiction of the Good Shepherd on the ceiling of the crypt.

Here, in the catacombs, had been renewed the custom of the first eras of Christianity, long ago abandoned by the Church,—at the end of the service the brethren and sisters greeted one another with the "kiss of peace." Arsinoë, following the general example, kissed Anatolius. Then all four of them set out from the lower tiers to the upper whence there was an entrance to the secret retreat of Juventinus,—an abandoned pagan sepulchre, or *columbarium,* situated at some distance to one side of the Appian Way. Here, in expectation of a ship which was to carry him off to Ægypt, he hid him-

self from the persecutions of his mother, who lodged complaints against him with the officials of the prefect, and where he dwelt with Didimus, a pious ancient from the Lower Thebaïd. Juventinus was undergoing a strict novitiate with the old man.

Didimus, squatting on his heels in the columbarium, was weaving a basket of ivy twigs. A moonbeam, falling through a narrow air vent, illumed his grey, downy locks and long beard. From top to bottom in the walls of this sepulchre were hollowed out small depressions, resembling nests in a dove-cote; in each of these nests stood an urn with the ashes of some one departed.

Myrrha, of whom the old man was very fond, kissed his wrinkled hand, and begged him to tell them something of the desert anchorite fathers. Nothing pleased her as much as these strange and marvellous stories. With the tender smile of the old, he stroked Myrrha's hair with the utmost gentleness. They all disposed themselves in a circle around the old man.

He told them stories, legends of the great eremites of Thebaïd, Nitria, Mesopotamia. Myrrha gazed upon him with flaming eyes, her slender fingers pressed to her breast. The smile of the blind man was fraught with a childlike tenderness, and the silken, soft, grey hair surrounded his head like an halo. They all kept silence. The never-stilled hum of Rome reached their ears.

Suddenly at the inner door of the columbarium, communicating with the catacombs, there sounded a low knocking. Juventinus arose, drew near the door, and asked, without opening:

"Who is there?"

He was not answered; but the knocking was repeated, still more faint, as though imploring. He cautiously

opened the door, took a step back,—and a tall woman entered the columbarium. Long, white raiment enveloped her from head to foot and fell over her face. She moved like one ailing, or very aged. All gazed in silence at the newcomer.

With a single motion of her hand she cast back the long folds overhanging her face,—and Juventinus cried out:

"Mother!"

The woman cast herself down at the feet of her son and embraced them. Her locks of grey hair, becoming dishevelled, fell upon a face emaciated, pale, pitiful, but still proud. Juventinus embraced his mother's head and kissed her.

"Juventinus!" the ancient called him.

The youth made no reply.

The mother was speaking to him in a rapid, joyous whisper, as though they were alone:

"Methought I would nevermore behold thee, my son! I wanted to journey to Alexandrea,—O, I would have found thee even there, in the desert, but now,—is it not so?—it is all over! Say that thou wilt not depart. Wait until I die. Then, do as thou wilt. . . ."

The ancient repeated:

"Juventinus, dost thou hear me?"

"Old man," uttered the woman, after casting a glance at the blind man, "thou wouldst not deprive a mother of her son! Hearken,—if need be I shall abjure the faith of my fathers, come to believe in the Crucified, become a nun. . . ."

"Thou dost not comprehend the law of Christ, woman! A mother may not be a nun; a nun may not be a mother."

"In torments did I bear him!"

" 'Tis not his soul thou lovest, but his body."

The woman cast upon Didimus a look filled with infinite hatred:

"Be ye accursed, then, with your crafty, lying words!" she exclaimed. "Be ye accursed, that deprive a mother of her children, ye that tempt the innocent, ye of the black garments, who fear the light of heaven; ye servants of the Crucified,—hating life, destroying all that is sacred and great in the universe! . . ."

Her face became distorted. Still closer did she cling with all her body to the feet of her son and managed to utter, gasping:

"I know, my child . . . thou wilt not go from me. . . . Thou couldst not. . . ."

The ancient Didimus, with a staff in his hands, stood near the open inner door of the columbarium,—the one leading into the catacombs.

"In the name of the living God, I command thee, my son,—follow me; leave her!" he uttered, loudly and solemnly.

Thereupon the woman of her own accord released her son from her embraces, and stammered out, in a voice barely audible:

"Well, leave me . . . go . . . if thou canst. . . ."

The tears ceased streaming from her eyes; her hands fell hopelessly on her knees. She waited.

"Help me, Lord!" uttered Juventinus in a whisper, pale, lifting his eyes up to heaven.

" 'If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple,' " [16] muttered Didimus, and, groping his way through the

door, for the last time turned around to the acolyte:

"Remain in the world, my son, and remember,—thou hast abjured Christ."

"Father! I am with thee . . . Lord, here I am!" exclaimed Juventinus and went after his teacher.

She made not a move to stop him, not a feature of her face quivered. But, when their steps had died away,—without a sound, without a moan, she fell, like one mown down.

"Open! In the name of the Devout Emperor Constantius,—open!"

These were warriors, despatched by the prefect at the complaint of the mother of Juventinus, in order to search out the rebellious Sabellians, who professed Consubstantiality and were enemies of the Emperor. The soldiers were striking with an iron bar at the doors of the columbarium. The building trembled. The urns of glass and silver with the ashes of the dead emitted a plaintive ring. The warriors had already torn off one-half of the door.

Anatolius, Myrrha and Arsinoë dashed off into the inner galleries of the catacombs. The Christians were scurrying through the narrow subterranean passages, like ants in a turned-up ant-hill, bent upon reaching the secret doors and staircases communicating with the stone-quarry. Arsinoë and Myrrha had no exact knowledge of the disposition of the catacombs. They lost their way and got into the very lowest tier, situated at a depth of fifty ells below ground. Here breathing was difficult. Swamp water oozed underfoot. The exhausted flame of the lamp was dimming. The evil stench poisoned the air. Myrrha's head began to swim,—she lost consciousness. Anatolius picked her up in his arms. They were in instant fear of stumbling upon the warriors. There was another danger

as well,—the exits might be filled in, and they would be left underground, buried alive.

At last they heard Juventinus calling them:

"Hither! Hither!"

Bent over, he was carrying on his shoulders the ancient Didimus. In a few minutes they reached a secret egress to the stone-quarry, and, from there, the Campagna.

Upon returning home, Arsinoë hurriedly undressed Myrrha, who had not yet come to, and put her in bed. In the faint glow of morning, standing on her knees, the elder sister long kissed the little girl's hands,—still, wasted, and as yellow as wax. There was a strange expression upon the face of the sleeper. Never yet had it breathed forth such immaculate charm. All her little body seemed transparent and fragile, like the too thin sides of an alabaster amphora, illuminated by a flame from within.—This flame was to be extinguished only with the life of Myrrha.

XVIII

LATE in the evening, in a swampy, dreamy forest, not far from the Rhine, between the military fortification of Tres Tabernæ and the Roman town of Argentoratum, recently gained in battle by the Alemanni, two strayed warriors were picking their way; one, an ungainly giant with hair of a fiery hue and the face of a good-natured urchin, a Sarmatian in the service of Rome, Aragaris; the other was a small, thin, wrinkled, tanned Syrian,—Strombic by name.

It was dark amid the tree-trunks, covered with lichens and fungous growths; through the warm air a soundless rain was falling; there was the odour of the fresh leaves of the birch and the wet pine needles; somewhere in the distance a cuckoo was calling. At every rustle, or the crackling of dry twigs, Strombic would quake in terror and seize the arm of his companion.

"Uncle, oh, uncle!"

He did not call Aragaris thus because of kinship, but out of friendship,—they had been inducted into the Roman forces from two opposite ends of the universe; the gluttonous and continent Barbarian of the North despised the Syrian,—cowardly, voluptuous, and moderate in food and drink; but, jeering at him, he took pity upon him as one might with an infant.

"Uncle!" Strombic fell to whining, still more piteously.

"What art thou mewling about? Leave me be."

"Be there bears in this forest? How thinkest thou, uncle?'

"There be," replied Aragaris sullenly.

"But what if we should come upon one? Eh?"

"We shall kill him, flay his skin, sell it, and drink up the proceeds."

"But what if we kill him not, but he us?"

"Thou little coward! One can tell a Christian right off."

"Wherefore must a Christian necessarily be a coward?" Strombic grew offended.

"Eh, thou thyself hast told me that in your book 'tis said: 'If they smite thy left cheek, turn thy right also.' "

"That's what it says."

"Well, there now,—thou canst see for thyself. But if that be so, then there is no need of warring,—the foe ups and smites thee on one cheek, and thou givest him thy other. Cowards, are ye all,—that's what!"

"Cæsar Julian is a Christian yet no coward," Strombic defended himself.

"I know, little nephew," went on Aragaris, "that ye know how to forgive your enemies,—when it comes to a combat. Eh, you wet chickens! All thy belly, at that, is no bigger than my fist. Eat an onion,—and thou art full for the whole day. That's why thy blood is like swamp mire."

"Eh, uncle, uncle," uttered Strombic reproachfully, "why hast thou ever brought up eating! That has started the gnawing under my breast bone again. Dearest fellow, give me a head of garlic,—I know thou hast it left in thy bag."

"If I should give thee the last food to-morrow we shall both drop dead in this forest."

"Oh, how qualmish, how qualmish I feel! If thou wilt not give it me at once,—I shall grow weak, keel over, and thou wilt have to bear me on thy shoulders."

"Well, the devil take thee,—here, eat!"

"And some bread,—some bread!" implored Strombic.

Aragaris, with a curse, gave up to his friend his last piece of soldiers' crust.

He himself had eaten, the evening before, enough pork fat and bean pottage to last him for at least two days.

"Quiet," said he, halting. "A trumpet! 'Tis not far from camp. We must keep on toward the north. 'Tis not bears I dread," went on Aragaris pensively, after a short silence, "but the centurion."

The warriors had, in jest, nicknamed this execrated centurion Cedo-Alteram,—Give-Us-A-New-One—because he was wont to call out "CedoAlteram!" with a gleeful mien every time that the rod, wherewith he flogged soldiers at fault, would break. These two words had become a by-word.

"I am convinced," uttered the barbarian, "that Give-Us-A-New-One will do with my back just what the tanner doth with an ox-hide. 'Tis bad, little nephew,—'tis bad!"

They had lagged behind the troops, because Aragaris, according to his wont, had drunk himself into insensibility in a pillaged village, whereas Strombic had been beaten up,—the little Syrian had desired to gain by force the favour of a handsome Frankish maid; the sixteen-year-old beauty, daughter of a slain barbarian, had given him two such slaps on his cheeks that he had tumbled flat on his back,—and then had trampled upon

him with her mighty, white feet. " 'Tis no wench, but a devil," Strombic told the story. "I did but pinch her, but she well-nigh broke all my ribs."

The sound of the trumpet was becoming more distinct. Aragaris sniffed the wind like a beagle. He drew in a whiff of smoke,—probably the fires of the Roman camp were near. It grew so dark that they could barely distinguish the way; the path vanished in a swamp; they jumped from tussock to tussock. A fog was rising. Suddenly, from an enormous fir, whose branches were garlanded with moss, resembling locks of long grey hair, something fluttered upward, with a cry and a swishing. Strombic squatted down from fright. It was a wood-grouse. They had lost their way completely. Strombic climbed a tree.

"The camp-fires are to the north. 'Tis not far. I see a big river over there."

"The Rhine! The Rhine!" cried out Aragaris. "Let us walk faster!"

They began making their way through the age-old birches and firs.

"Uncle, I'm a-drowning!" Strombic fell to whimpering. "Some one is dragging me down by the feet. Where art thou?"

Aragaris with great difficulty helped him to clamber out of the bog, and, cursing, picked him up on his shoulders. The Sarmatian felt underfoot the old, half-rotted logs of the fascine-way laid down by the Romans. This causeway brought them to the highway, recently cleared through the forest by the troops of Severus, commander-in-chief under Julian. The barbarians, in order to block the road, had piled it up, according to

their wont, by hewing down tree-trunks. They were forced to clamber over these; these enormous trees, thrown on each other in disorder, at times rotted, merely covered on the surface with moss and crumbling to dust at the touch of the foot, at others firm, water-logged from the rain and slippery, made their every step more difficult.—And over such roads, under the eternal fear of an attack, Julian's army of thirty thousand was compelled to move,—Julian, whom all of the Emperor's commanders had treacherously abandoned,—with the exception of Severus.

Strombic whimpered, acted capriciously, and cursed his comrade:

"I'll go no farther, thou heathen! I'll lay me down in the bog and drop dead,—then, at least, I shall no more set eyes on thy accursed phiz. Ugh, thou un-Christian dog! One can tell right off thou hast no cross upon thee. Is it Christian work to be traipsing along such roads at night? And wherever are we pushing? Right under the feet of the centurion, whom the very God hates. I shan't go a step farther! . . ."

Aragaris dragged him along by force, and, as soon as the road had become more even, again carried his comrade—who resisted, cursed and pinched him,—on his shoulders. After some time Strombic slept the sleep of innocence on the back of the "heathen."

At midnight they arrived at the gates of the Roman stand. Everything was quiet. The drawbridge over the deep moat had long since been withdrawn. The cronies were forced to pass the night in the forest, near the *decumana*,[17] or back-gate.

At dawn a trumpet sounded. In the misty forest, with its smell of fire, the nightingale was still singing,—he

fell silent, frightened by the martial sound. Aragaris, awaking, sniffed the odour of the scorching soldiers' porridge, and aroused Strombic. They both felt such a desire to eat, that, disregarding the knobby rod with which the hated centurion Give-Us-A-New-One had managed to arm himself, they entered the camp and sat down at the common cauldron.

In the main tent, near the Prætorian Gate, Cæsar Julian was keeping his vigil. Since that day in Mediolanum when he had been designated Cæsar, thanks to the patronage of the Empress Eusebia, he had zealously devoted himself to martial exercises; not only did he study, under the guidance of Severus, the military art, but desired to know to perfection also that which constituted the trade of the common soldier,—to the sounds of a brass trumpet, in the dismal barracks, on the Field of Mars, together with the raw recruits, for whole days on end, he learned to march in the ranks with measured step; to shoot from the bow and with the sling; to run under the weight of full accoutrement; to jump over wattled hedges and ditches.—Surmounting his monkish hypocrisy there was awaking in the youth the blood of the line of Constantine,—a whole succession of generations of stern, unyielding warriors.

"Alas, Divine Iamblicus and Plato, if you were but to see what has become of your foster-child!" he would at times exclaim, wiping the sweat off his face; and, pointing to his heavy brass accoutrements, would say to his preceptor:

"Is it not true, Severus, that this weapon is just as little befitting to me, a peaceful apostle of the philosophers, as a saddle is to a cow?"

Severus, making no reply, would smile slyly,—he

knew that all these sighings and complaints were but dissembling; in reality the Cæsar took joy in his rapid successes in the military science.

In several months he had changed so, had matured and become so manly, that many with difficulty recognized in him the former puny "Little Greek," as at one time, in mockery, they had been wont to style him at the court of Constantius; only the eyes of Julian burned with the same strange flame, much too keen, as though feverish, which made him remembered of all, even after a momentary meeting.

He felt himself stronger with every day, not only in body, but in spirit as well. For the first time in his life he was experiencing the happiness of the simple love of simple folk. It proved to the liking of the legionaries, from the very start, to have a veritable Cæsar, the cousin of the Augustus, serving his apprenticeship in the military trade in the very barracks, not ashamed of the rude soldier life. The stern faces of old warriors would light up with a smile of tenderness as they admired the growing dexterity of the Cæsar, and, recalling their own youth, they were struck by the rapid successes of Julian. He would walk up to them, strike up a conversation, hearing out to the end their tales of old campaigns, their counsels on tying up the breastplates so that the straps should not chafe, or how to set down the foot so as not to tire on long marches. The rumour was spreading that Emperor Constantius had despatched the inexperienced youth into Gallia to his death at the hands of the barbarians, had "driven him to slaughter," in order to be freed from his rival,—also that the commanders, at the instigation of the court eunuchs, were betraying the Cæsar. This made the love of the soldiers for Julian still stronger.

With cautious insinuation, with that ability to ingratiate himself which his monkish education had endowed him with, he did everything to strengthen in his troops their love toward him, their enmity toward the Emperor. He spoke to them of his brother Constantius with an equivocal, crafty meekness, casting down his eyes, assuming the air of a victim. To captivate the warriors, to make them in love with him through his fearlessness, was all the easier for the Cæsar since death in battle seemed enviable to him, compared with that ignominious decolation which had overtaken his brother Gallus,—the fate which, perhaps, the Augustus was preparing for him as well.

Julian arranged his life after the example of the ancient Roman military leaders; the stoical wisdom of the eunuch Mardonius had helped him since early childhood to learn abstention from luxury. He slept less than the commonest soldier, and, to boot, not on a bed, but on a coarse rug with long wool,—a *suburra*. The first part of the night he dedicated to rest; the second to matters military and governmental; the third,—to the muses. His favourite books did not leave him in his campaigns. He would seek inspiration now in Marcus Aurelius, now in Plutarch, now in Suetonius, now in Cato the Censor. In the daytime he strove to carry out that which he had visioned forth in the night-time over his books.

On that memorable morning before the battle of Argentoratum, having heard the reveille at dawn, Julian clad himself hastily and ordered his steed to be brought. After this he withdrew into the most hidden spot in the tent. Here was standing a little carved image of Mercury with the *caduceus*, the god of mobility, success and gaiety,—winged, flying. Julian got down on his

knees before him, and cast upon the sacrificial tripod a few grains of incense. From the direction of the smoke the Cæsar, who took pride in his attainments in the art of the soothsayers, endeavoured to guess whether a fortunate or an unfortunate day was in store for him. In the night he had thrice heard the cawing of a crow to the right,—an ominous portent. He was so convinced that his unexpected military successes in Gallia were the work not of human hands that with every day he waxed more superstitious.

Coming out of the tent, he stumbled against the wooden beam which served for a threshold. His face became overcast. All the portents were unfavourable. Secretly he resolved to put off the encounter till the following day.

The army set out. The way through the forest was difficult; the piled-up tree-trunks barred it. The day promised to be hot. When noon came the Romans had covered but half their journey, while to reach the army of the barbarians, disposed on the left bank of the Rhine, upon a desolate plain near the city of Argentoratum, there still remained twenty-one thousand paces more. The soldiers had become tired.

As soon as they had come out of the forest, the Cæsar got them together and disposed them in circles, like spectators in an amphitheatre, so that he himself was placed in the central point of the circles, while the centuries and cohorts spread from him like rays,—this was the customary order, calculated to have the largest possible number of men hear the address of their leader. In short, simple words he explained to them that it was late in the day, and that their fatigue might interfere with success; that it was more prudent to pitch camp

on the same spot they occupied, to rest, and on the next morning, with fresh strength, to give battle.

Grumbling arose in the troops. The soldiers smote their shields with their spears, which was a sign of impatience, and demanded with outcries that he lead them into battle without delay. The Cæsar gathered from the expressions on their faces that he ought not to oppose them. He sensed in the throng that ominous restlessness so familiar to him, which is necessary for victories, and which, at the least inadvertency, can turn into mutiny. He sprang on his steed and gave the signal,—the troops again set forth.

When the afternoon sun began to decline, they reached the Plain of Argentoratum. The Rhine showed white between low knolls. To the south the forest-clad Vosges loomed blackly. The sand-martins skimmed over the surface of the majestic and desolate German river; willows bowed their pallid branches towards it.

Suddenly, upon a near knoll, there appeared three equestrians,—they were barbarians. The Romans halted and began falling into battle formation. Julian, surrounded by six hundred iron-clad equestrians,—the *clibanarii*,—headed the cavalry on the right wing; on the left wing the old, experienced chief Severus, whom the young Cæsar obeyed in all things, commanded the infantry. Against Julian the barbarians put forth their cavalry. At their head was Chnodomar, the Alemannic King himself; against Severus was pitted Chnodomar's young nephew, Agenaric, with the infantry.

War horns, brazen tubas, winding *buccinæ* blared forth; the small insignia with the names of the cohorts, the purple dragons, the brazen eagles of Rome at the head of the legions, all gathered closer; in front, with

calm, austere faces, stepped forth the axe-bearers and the *primopilares,* habituated to victories, with measured, heavy tread from which the ground shook and rumbled.

Suddenly the infantry of Severus on the left wing halted. The barbarians, who had hidden in a ditch, unexpectedly pounced out of their ambush and fell upon the Romans. Julian caught sight of their confusion from afar and flew to their aid. He endeavoured to calm the soldiers and addressed now one cohort, now another, imitating the concise and powerful style of Julius Cæsar. When he would pronounce "*Exurgamus, viri fortes,*" or "*Advenit, socii, justum pugnandi jam tempus,*" this youth of six and twenty years reflected with pride: "I now resemble such or such a hero of antiquity!" He was mentally, even in the very heat of combat, surrounded by books, rejoicing that everything was taking place precisely as in the descriptions of Titus Livius, Plutarch, Sallust. The experienced Severus moderated his ardent zeal with a sage calm, and, giving the Cæsar a certain liberty, did not let slip out of his own hands the chief direction of the troops.

There came the whizzing of arrows, of barbarian spears, thrown upon long lassoes, of enormous stones hurled by war-engines. The Romans beheld at last, face to face, these fearsome and mysterious people of the north, these dwellers of the dreamy forests beyond the Rhine, of whom there were so many unbelievable tales afloat.—Here were monstrous armaments,—the enormous bare backs of some were covered with bearskins instead of garments, while, in lieu of a helmet, there towered above the shaggy head the gaping maw of some beast with white fangs; others had the horns of stag and bull sticking above their casques; the Alemanni bore such

contempt for death that they threw themselves into battle stark naked, with but a sword or a spear; their red hair was tied in a knot on the top of their heads and fell down on their necks in an enormous tuft or braid, resembling a mane; their long, white, tapering moustaches, drooping, stood out in relief against their ruddy faces. Many were at such a stage of savagery that, not knowing the use of iron, they fought with lances tipped with fish-bone, dipped in a death-fraught venom, which made them more dangerous than iron,—one prick of these fearful needles sufficed to make a man die a slow death in indescribable tortures; instead of breast-plates, they were covered from head to foot with thiny horny layers made of horse-hooves, stoutly sewn to linen stuff; in such array these unknown savages had the appearance of strange monsters, covered with bird-feathers, and fish-scales. Here was the Saxon, pale-blue of eye,—no sea held any terror for him, but he feared the earth upon which he trod; and an old Sicambrian—he had shaved his hair after a defeat as a mark of grief and was now letting it grow anew; and the Herule, with eyes turbidly green, of almost the same hue as the waters of Ocean, on a distant gulf of which he dwelt; and the Burgundion, and the Batavian, and the Sarmatian; and others,—unnamed, half-beasts, half-men,—their dreadful faces the Romans beheld only before death came.

The primopilares, joining their shields, had formed a solid brazen wall, slowly advancing, impervious to all blows. The Alemanni flung themselves against it, with cries that were like to the roaring of bears. There began a hand-to-hand battle,—breast to breast, shield to shield. The dust rose up above the plain, screening the sun.

At this instant, on the right wing of the troops, the

iron-clad cavalry,—the clibanarii,—swayed, and turned to flight. There was a possibility of its trampling upon the legions in their rear. There, through the clouds of arrows and spears, flashed in the dusty sun the fiery headband of the gigantic King Chnodomar.

Julian galloped up to the spot in good time. He had comprehended the subterfuge,—the infantrymen of the barbarians, purposely placed among the horses of the equestrians, were crawling under the feet of the Roman steeds and slitting their bellies with short swords; the steeds fell and drew along with them the iron-clad *cataphracti*, who could not rise up, burdened down by the weight of their mail-armour.

Julian placed himself across their path, in order either to halt the cavalry or be trampled to death by it. With the steed of the Cæsar collided the steed of the fleeing tribune of the clibanarii. He recognised Julian and halted, blanching from shame and fear. All of Julian's blood rushed to his face. He suddenly forgot all his bookish precepts, bent over, seized the fugitive by the throat, and yelled in a voice which even to himself appeared unfamiliar and savage:

"Thou coward!" And the Cæsar turned him with his face to the enemies. Thereupon all the cataphracti halted, recognised the Cæsar's purple dragon, tattered in many battles,—and grew ashamed. In a single instant the iron mass ebbed and thunderously rushed back upon the barbarians. Everything became confusion. A spear struck Julian's chest,—only his cuirass saved him; an arrow whizzed by his ear, so that its feathers brushed his cheek.

At this instant, to the assistance of the weakening cavalry, Severus despatched the dreaded legions of the

Cornuti and the Braccatti, semi-savage allies of Rome. They had a custom of chanting a battle hymn,—the *barytes*,—only during the ultimate deathly horror and intoxication of battle. The Cornuti and the Braccatti began their chant in a tone plaintive and muffled,—its first sounds were low, soft, like the rustling of leaves in the night; little by little the song waxed louder, more triumphant, and ominous; finally it was transformed into an unbearable surge, like to the surging of the ocean waves, lashed to fury, breaking against crags. With this song they intoxicated themselves unto frenzy.

Julian ceased to see and to comprehend; he felt only a great thirst and the pain of weariness in his right hand, which held the sword; time for him had vanished. But Severus, without losing his presence of mind, directed the combat with wisdom. With incomprehension and despair the Cæsar noticed the flaming yellow head-band of the corpulent Chnodomar in the very midst, the very heart of the Roman troops,—the infantry of the barbarians had cut into them like a wedge. Julian reflected: " 'Tis the end,—everything is lost!" He recalled the ill-omened portents of the morning and addressed a last prayer to the gods: "Come to my succour,—for if not I, who else shall re-establish upon earth your might, O Olympians?"

In the heart of the army were old warriors of the Legion of the Petulants,—"The Seething Ones," called so for their daring; Severus counted upon them,—nor did he err. One of the Petulants cried out:

"*Viri fortissimi!* Bravest of men! Let us not betray Rome and the Cæsar! Let us die for Julian!"

"Long live Cæsar Julian! For Rome! For Rome!"

And the old men, grown grey under banners, once again went out to their death, austere and calm. Julian with tears of rapture rushed towards them, in order to die together with them. And again he felt how the power of a simple love, the power of his people, was exalting him.

Horror swept over the hordes of the barbarians,—they wavered and fled. And the brazen eagles of the legions, with their feral beaks, with their outspread wings, ominously flashing in the sun through the dust, once more soared off, proclaiming to the fleeing tribes the victory of the Eternal City.

The Alemanni and the Franks died fighting to the last gasp. Here and there some barbarian, standing with one knee in a pool of blood, still raised aloft with his weakening arm a dulled sword or the stump of a spear; in their glazing eyes there was nor fear nor despair, but only the thirst for vengeance. Even those whom they thought slain would rise up from the ground, half-crushed, and seize the legs of their enemies with their teeth, sinking them in with such force that the Romans dragged them along the ground. Six thousand of the men of the north fell on the field of battle, or sank in the Rhine.

On that evening, as the Cæsar Julian stood on a knoll, surrounded, as by an aureole, by the rays of the sinking sun, they brought to him King Chnodomar, captured on the right bank of the Rhine; corpulent, sweating, and pale, he was breathing heavily; his hands were bound behind his back; he sank to his knees before his conqueror,—and the Roman Cæsar of six and twenty years laid his small hand upon the shaggy, rufous mane of the barbarian king.

XIX

It was the time of the grape harvest. The whole day songs to Bacchus resounded along the joyous marge of Parthenope.

At Baiæ, near Naples, a suburban spot beloved of the Romans, celebrated for its medicinal sulphurous baths, of which even the poets of the times of Augustus had sung: *Nullus in orbe locus Baiis prelucet amœnis,*—idle men took delight in a nature as indolent and as voluptuous as themselves.

Not a single shadow of the monastic age had yet fallen upon the sun-flooded littoral between Vesuvius and Cape Misenum; here Christianity was not denied, but simply put off with a jest; harlots did not repent here,—rather, honest women were ashamed of their virtue, as of an antiquated custom. When rumours of the prophecies of the Sibyls would reach here, threatening the end of the universe, or of the bigotry and malefactions of Constantius, or of the Persians, advancing from the East, or of the clouds of the barbarians, swelling in the North, or of the immured anchorites, who lost all human semblance in the deserts of the Thebaïd,—the happy inhabitants of these regions, shutting their eyes, would inhale the exquisite aroma of the Falernian clusters and console themselves with epigrams, in the style of Tibullus and Propertius, which they sent to each other as *apophoreta* or *xenia,*—little presents:

Calet unda, friget æthra;
Simul innatat choreis
Amathusium renidens,
Salis arbitra et vaporis
Flos siderum, Dione.

There was something senile, and, at the same time, something puerile on the gayest faces of these last Epicureans. Neither the fresh briny water of the sea waves, nor the boiling sulphur streams of the Baiæ springs bestowed healing upon the flabby, easily chilled bodies of these young people, bald, toothless at twenty, grown aged from the vices of their ancestors, satiated with wordiness, wisdom, women, with ancient exploits and new vices, witty and impotent, in whose veins flowed the blood of belated generations.

In one of the snuggest and most blossoming nooks, between Baiæ and Puteoli, amid the flat black tops of the southern pines, the marble walls of a villa gleamed whitely. At an open window giving out on the sea, so that naught could be seen from the room save the sea and the sky, Myrrha lay in bed.

The leeches could not diagnose her ailment. Arsinoë, seeing her sister drooping from day to day, had carried her off from Rome to the seashore. Despite her illness, Myrrha, emulating the nuns and keeping a strict fast, cleaned her room herself, carried water, and even tried to wash her linen and to cook; for a long time she would not consent to take to her bed; she passed her nights in prayers and vigils. On one occasion Arsinoë learned that the sick girl was wearing a hair-shirt next to her body. She ordered everything to be carried out of her little chamber save a couch with a simple iron cross at its head. The room with its bare walls took on the air of a

cell. It was impossible to contend against the meek obstinacy of the invalid.

Tedium vanished from the life of Arsinoë; from hope she would pass to despair, and although she loved her sister no less than before, it was only now,—so it seemed to her,—under the dread of an eternal separation, that she understood all the force of this love.

At times she would contemplate for long spells the thin, emaciated face of Myrrha, breathing of an unearthly beauty,—or her little body, consumed by an inward heat. When the invalid would stubbornly refuse the medicaments and food prescribed by physicians, Arsinoë would tell her with vexation:

"Can I not see, Myrrha? Thou art fain to die. . . ."

"Is it not all the same,—to live or to die?" the girl would answer with such clarity, that Arsinoë did not know what reply to make.

"Thou dost not love me!" she would reproach her sister, restraining her tears of hurt.

But Myrrha would caress her closely with an infinite tenderness:

"Thou knowest not how much I love thee. Oh, if thou couldst but know! . . ."

She would not finish, and would look at her with a prolonged, intent gaze, as though she were fain to say something and durst not,—Arsinoë felt in this gaze an inflexible supplication, and still she would not speak with her about faith, nor had the courage to reveal her own doubts,—perhaps to deprive her sister of an insane hope.

Myrrha grew weaker with every day, melting away, like the wax of a burning candle,—but even as her weakness increased, so did her joyousness.

Occasionally they were visited by Juventinus, who

had fled from Rome, fearing the persecutions of his mother, and who was, together with the ancient Didimus, biding in Naples the sailing of a ship for Alexandrea. He read the Evangel, told them legends of the desert anchorite fathers,—of the three goodwives who, for many years, beholding not any human face, dwelt, stark naked, as in paradise, under the shade of virent boughs, at the bottom of a ravine, on the bank of an icy spring,—ever joyous, praising God day and night; they fed upon fruits, brought to them by birds; in winter they feared not cold, nor heat in summer; the Lord did shelter and warm them with His beneficence.

With a child-like joyfulness did Myrrha listen to the legend of the most holy Gerizim, who did dwell in a lion's lair; the lion had grown so friendly to him, that he did lead the saint's ass to drench, and licked his hands whenever the anchorite would stroke his mane; while after the death of Gerizim the beast did wander for long, yearning, emitting a piteous roar; but when he was brought to the grave of the saint, he did sniff it, laid down, and no more rose up therefrom, taking no food, till that he gave up his breath.

Myrrha was touched by the legend of another eremite, who had cured of blindness the whelps of a hyæna, which the mother had brought in her maw to the feet of the saint.

How she yearned to go thither,—into the dark, soundless caverns, where these holy men dwelt! The desert seemed to her blossoming, like paradise. At times, in delirium, tortured by the thirst of the desert, she would follow with her eyes the white sails, disappearing in the sea, and would stretch out her arms towards them.—O,

could she but have flown after them on wings, could she but breathe her fill of the air of the desert!—At times she tried to arise from her bed, asserting that she was better, that now she would soon be entirely well, and hoping in secret that she would be allowed to go with Didimus and Juventinus, when the Alexandrean ship arrived.

At this period the centurion Anatolius lived in Baiæ. He arranged excursions upon gilt boats from the lake of Avernus into the bay, with merry companions and handsome women; he took delight in the sight of purple lateen sails upon the mirror of the sleeping sea,—the play of evening colours upon craggy Capreæ and misty Ischia, resembling transparent amethysts; he rejoiced in the railleries of his friends anent a faith in the gods; he took joy in the fragrance of wine, in the bought, yet nevertheless sweet, kisses of harlots. But, every time he stepped into the monastic cell of Myrrha, he felt that the other half of life was also accessible to him,—the chaste beauty of her pale face touched him, he wanted to believe in all that she believed in; he listened to the stories of Juventinus about the eremites,—and their life seemed beautiful to him.

On a certain evening Myrrha fell asleep before the open window. On awaking she said to Juventinus with a smile:

"I have beheld a dream."

"What was it?"

"I remember not,—save that 'twas a happy one.—What thinkest thou,—will all people be saved?"

"All the righteous."

"The righteous, the sinners! . . . Nay, I think—"

Myrrha made answer with the same joyous and meditative smile, as though trying to recall the dream, "Dost know, Juventinus,—I think that all, all will be saved, every single one,—and God shall not have a single lost soul!"

"Thus did Origen teach: '*Salvator meus lætari non potest donec ego in iniquitate permaneo.* My Saviour shall not rejoice as long as I dwell in iniquity.' But that is heresy."

"Yea, yea,—thus it should be," Myrrha continued, without listening. "I have now come to know it,—all shall be saved, every single one! God would not let any sort of creature perish."

"I, too, am fain to think thus at times," uttered Juventinus. "But I fear me. . . ."

"One should not fear,—if there be love, then there is no fear. I do not fear."

"But what of—Him?" asked Juventinus.

"Who?"

"He who must not be named,—the Unsubmissive One?"

"He too,—He too!" exclaimed Myrrha with fearless faith. "While there will be left a single soul that hath not attained salvation, no creature can be saved. If there be no limit to love, could it be otherwise? When all are united in a single love,—then all things shall be in God, and God shall be in all things. My beloved, what a joy is life! We do not know this, as yet. But it is necessary to bless all things; dost thou understand, my brother, what it means,—to bless all things?"

"And what of evil?"

"There is no evil, if there be no death."

Through the windows there reached them the gav

songs of the companions of Anatolius in the festal boats, their purple lateen sails glistening on the bay, now darkling at even. Myrrha pointed to them:

"And this, too, is good, and this, too, ought to be blessed," she uttered quietly, as though to herself.

"Pagan songs?" asked Juventinus, with a timid incomprehension. Myrrha inclined her head:

"Yea, yea. All things. All things are good, all things are holy. Beauty is the light of God. What art thou afraid of, beloved? O, how necessary is freedom in order to love! Love Him and have no fear! Love all things. Thou dost not yet know what happiness life is." And, with a profound sigh, as though in expectation of great repose, she added:

"And what happiness death is."

This was their last conversation. For several days she lay in silence, without moving, without opening her eyes; in all probability she must have been suffering exceedingly,—her slender eye-brows occasionally contracted, but again her erstwhile smile, wan and meek, would come to the fore,—and not a single moan, not a single complaint escaped her lips. Once, in the middle of the night, in a barely audible voice, she called Arsinoë, who was sitting alongside. The invalid could speak only with difficulty.

"Is it day?" she asked, without opening her eyes.

" 'Tis still night; but it will be morn soon," answered Arsinoë.

"I can not hear,—who art thou?" uttered Myrrha, still more quietly.

" 'Tis I,—Arsinoë."

The sick girl suddenly opened her eyes and looked at her sister intently.

"Yet it seemed to me," she uttered with an effort, "that it was not thou, that I was alone."

And slowly, with great difficulty, barely moving, Myrrha folded her thin, transparently pale hands palm to palm, with a timid supplication; the corners of her lips quivered; her eyebrows went up.

"Abandon me not, Arsinoë! When I die, think not that I no longer am. . . ."

Her sister bent over; but the sick girl was too weak to embrace her neck,—she tried, and could not. Thereupon Arsinoë drew her cheek close to the sick girl's eyes, and the latter most softly brushed her sister's face with her downy, long lashes, now lowering, now raising them, as though she were stroking her,—this, since childhood, was their wonted caress, invented by Myrrha; it seemed as if a butterfly were beating against the cheek with its frail wings. This last, child-like caress suddenly recalled to Arsinoë all their life together, all their love. She fell down on her knees, and for the first time in many years burst into sobbing, freely and sweetly; her heart, it seemed to her, was melting, pouring out in these tears.

"Nay, nay, nay," she sobbed, more and more unrestrainably. "I shall not abandon thee; I shall be with thee,—always, everywhere! . . ."

The eyes of the dying girl flashed with joy; she uttered in a whisper:

"That means, thou . . . ?"

"Yea, I believe,—I want to, and I shall, believe!" exclaimed Arsinoë,—and suddenly was amazed herself by these unexpected words; they appeared to her a miracle, but not a deception, and she no longer wanted to retract them.

"I shall go into the desert, Myrrha, as thou wouldst have done,—in thy place!" she went on, with an impulse almost insane. "And if there be a God, He must so make it that death shall be no death, that we may be together, —for ever!"

Myrrha, listening to her sister, closed her eyes with a smile of infinite repose.

"Now all is well. I shall fall asleep," she uttered in a whisper.

And from that time on she no more oped her eyes, nor spake. Her face was calm and austere, like those of the dead. But she still breathed for several days. When a goblet with wine would be brought up to her closed lips, she would swallow a few drops. But if her breathing would become uneven and laboured, Juventinus, bending over her, would read some prayer in a low voice, or chant some church hymn,—and Myrrha would again begin breathing more easily, more evenly, as though lulled to sleep.

Once, on a radiant evening, when the sun had transformed Ischia and Capreæ into pellucid amethysts, the motionless sea was blending with the sky, and the first star was not yet a-glimmer, but merely foresensed in the unattainable height,—Juventinus began singing the evening hymn over her who was dying:

Deus, creator omnium
Polique rector vestiens
Diem decore lumine,
Noctem sopora gratia . . .

God, creator of all being,
King of heavens, who dost clothe
Days with beams of radiant splendour,
And the nights with somnolent beauty,

To restore the tired members,
Unto labour, after resting;
To sustain the failing spirit;
To resolve all timid sorrow . . .

To the sounds of this chant Myrrha breathed her last. None noticed when she ceased breathing. Life and death were for her one and the same,—her life blended with eternity, even as the warmth of the evening blends with the freshness of night.

Arsinoë buried her sister in the catacombs, and with her own hands wrought out on the plate of marble: "*Myrra, vivis*—Myrrha, thou livest."

She barely wept; her soul was filled with a lethargy, a contempt for the world, and a resolve, like to despair, if not of a belief in God, at least of doing all that lay within her power to arrive at a belief in Him.

She desired, after distributing her estate, to withdraw into some desert.

On the same day that Arsinoë, to the indignation of her guardian, Hortensius, had told him of this, she received an enigmatic and laconic letter from Gallia, from the Cæsar Julian:

"Julian to the most noble Arsinoë,—glad tidings!

"Dost remember what we spake of in Athens, before the statue of Artemis the Huntress? Dost remember our alliance? Strong is my hatred; still stronger my love. Perchance the lion will soon throw off his ass's skin. But in the meanwhile let us be pure as the doves, wise as the serpents, according to the words of the Galilean." [18]

XX

Those courtiers whose wont it was to turn epigrams, who had at one time styled Julian "*victorinus*"—"a conqueroraster"—were now with wonder receiving news of the victories of the Cæsar in Gallia. The ludicrous was being transformed into the horrible. Many spake of magic and mysterious forces, which were coming to the aid of the friend of Maximus of Ephesus. Julian had reconquered and returned to the Empire Argentoratum, Brocomagum, Tres Tabernæ, Salyeson, Nemausus, Vangiones, Moguntiacum.

The soldiers deified him. With every step he was becoming more convinced that the gods were protecting him. But he continued visiting Christian churches, and in the city of Vienne, on the river Rhodanus, he purposely took part in a solemn high mass.

In the middle of October the victorious Cæsar was returning, after a long expedition, into winter quarters at the city beloved by him,—the tiny city of the Parisii, on the river Seine,—Lutetia Parisiorum.

It was evening. The northern sky struck the dwellers of the south with its strange chatoyant tint of pale-green. The snow, just fallen, crunched under the feet of the warriors.

Paris-Lutetia, situated in the middle of an island, was entirely surrounded by water. Two wooden bridges joined the city with the banks. The houses were of an especial Gallo-Roman architecture, with spacious entries

of glass, in lieu of the open porticoes of southern countries. Columns of smoke from a multitude of chimneys rose up over the city. The trees were draped with hoar-frost. In the gardens, turning to the noonday sun, like shivering children of the south, painstakingly swaddled in straw to safeguard them from the frosts, rare fig-trees were hugging the walls; they had been brought hither by the Romans. That year the winter persisted in its severity, despite the ocean winds from the south,—winds that brought thawing with them. Enormous white blocks of ice, colliding with one another and splitting with great crashing, floated down the Seine. The Roman and Greek warriors looked upon them with wonder. Julian, admiring these transparent blocks, blue and green at the same time, compared them with slabs of Phrygian white marble, slightly tinged with small veins of green.

There was something in all this sad, mysterious charm of the north which captivated and touched his heart, like the remembrance of a distant native land.

They rode up to the palace,—an enormous edifice, showing black with its ponderous brick arcatures and turrets against the light sky of evening.

Julian entered the book-ambry. Here it was damp and cold. A fire was made in the enormous fireplace. Several letters were handed to him, received in Lutetia during his absence; one was from Asia Minor, from the Divine Iamblichus.

A snow-storm sprang up. The wind howled in the chimney of the fireplace; some one seemed to be knocking at the closed shutters. Julian read through the letter of Iamblicus. He felt a breath of Hellas, of the south, blow upon him; he closed his eyes, and it seemed to him

that the marble Propylæa, enveloped with darkness, were whirling past him and dissolving, like visions, like golden clouds in the sky.

He shuddered and got up. The fire had gone out. A mouse was gnawing at a parchment roll. He felt a desire to see a living human countenance. Suddenly he recalled his wife, and a strange smile of mockery distorted his lips.

She was a relative of the Empress Eusebia, by the name of Helena, whom the Emperor had coerced into marrying Julian, shortly before his departure into Gallia. He did not love her; despite the fact that more than a year had gone by since the day of their espousal, he had scarcely seen or known her,—she still remained a virgin. Since her days of adolescence Helena had dreamt of becoming a "bride of Christ"; the thought of marriage inspired her with terror; having married, she had deemed herself lost. But subsequently, seeing that Julian did not demand marital endearments, she had become reassured and embarked upon the life of a nun in the palace,—always solitary, pale, quiet, enveloped from head to foot in black Christian garments. In her secret prayers she had taken a vow of chastity.

A malicious curiosity impelled him on this night to set out through dark, deserted passages to the turret of the palace occupied by Helena. He opened the door, without knocking, and entered into the faintly lit cell. The girl was standing on her knees before a *prie-dieu* and a large cross. He approached her, shielding the flame of the lamp with his hand, and for some time contemplated her in silence. She was so deeply plunged in prayer that she did not notice him. He spake:

"Helena."

She cried out and turned her pale face around toward him.

He directed a prolonged, intent gaze upon the cross, the Evangel, the *prie-dieu*.

"Still praying?"

"Yea, I am praying,—and for thee also, most pious Cæsar. . . ."

"And for me also? So that is how matters stand. Thou deemest me a great sinner, Helena?"

She cast down her eyes, without answering. He again smiled with the same strange, soft smile of mockery.

"Fear not. Speak. Dost thou not think me especially sinful in some one thing?"

He walked up to her and looked straight into her eyes. She uttered, barely audibly:

"Especially? Ay. I think,—do not be wroth with me. . . ."

"Tell me what it is. I shall repent."

"Mock not," she uttered, still more softly and sternly, without raising her eyes. "I shall give account for thy soul before God."

"Thou—for me?"

"We are bound for all time."

"Wherewith?"

"A sacramental mystery."

"The marriage at church? But, then, we are as yet strangers, Helena?"

"I fear for thy soul, Julian," she reiterated, looking straight into his eyes with her own, clear and innocent.

Putting his hand on her shoulder, he looked up with a smile of mockery at the bloodless face of the nun. A virginal chill was wafted from this face; only the tenderly rosy lips of her little, very beautiful mouth,

half-open with an expression of child-like fear and questioning, stood out in strange relief upon it. He suddenly bent over, and, before she had a chance to recover, kissed her on the lips. She jumped up, darted for the opposite corner of the cell, and covered her face with her hands; then she withdrew them slowly, and having looked upon him with eyes grown insane from fear, suddenly fell to hurried crossing of herself and him:

"Hence, hence, hence, Accursed One! Our place is holy! In the name of the true Cross I conjure thee,—perish, disappear! May God arise anew and His enemies be dispersed! . . ."

Malevolent anger took possession of him. He walked up to the door, and turned the key in it. Then he returned to his wife once more.

"Calm thyself, Helena. Thou hast taken me for *another*, but I am human, even as thou. The spirit hath not flesh and bones, as thou canst see I have. I am thy husband. The Church of Christ hath blessed our union."

She slowly passed her hand over her eyes:

"Forgive me. . . . 'Twas an illusion I saw. Thou didst come in so suddenly. I have already had visions. *He* wanders here of nights. I have already seen *Him* twice,—*He* spoke of thee to me. Since that time I have fears.—*He* telleth me that upon thy face . . . why dost thou look so, Julian? . . ."

Like a caught bird, she was all a-shiver, hugging the wall. He walked up to her and embraced her.

"What art thou doing? What art thou doing? Let me alone! . . ."

She made an attempt to cry out, to summon her female servant:

"Eleutheria! Eleutheria!"

"Silly one! Am I not thy husband? . . ."

She suddenly burst into quiet and helpless tears:

"Brother of mine! This must not be. I have made a vow to God; I am a bride of Christ. I thought that thou . . ."

"The bride of a Roman Cæsar can not be the bride of Christ!"

"Julian, if thou dost believe in Him . . ."

He began laughing. With a final effort she was trying to repulse him.

"Hence, devil,—devil! . . . Wherefore hast thou forsaken me, Lord? . . ."

Continuing to laugh, he was covering the nape of her white slender neck, at the roots of her hair, with malicious, avid kisses. It seemed to him that he was committing a murder. She had grown so weak that she scarce resisted, but she still whispered with infinite supplication:

"Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, brother of mine!"

With sacrilegious hands he was tearing off the black Christian vestments. His soul was enveloped with horror, but never in his life had he experienced such intoxication. —Suddenly, through the torn stuff, her nudity flashed out. Thereupon, with a scoff and a challenge, the Roman Cæsar cast a look at the opposite end of the cell, where the lamp flickered upon the *prie-dieu*, before the black Crucifix.

XXI

More than a year had passed since the time of the victory at Argentoratum.—Julian had liberated Gallia from the barbarians.

In the early fall, while still in winter quarters, in Lutetia, he had received an important missive from the Emperor, brought by the tribune of the notaries, Decensius.

Every victory of Julian's in Gallia affronted Constantius, was a fresh blow to his vanity,—this urchin, this "chattering magpie," this "ape in purple," this "conqueroraster," was, to the indignation of the court wits, turning into a veritable, awesome conqueror. Constantius envied Julian, and, at the same time he himself suffered defeat after defeat, in the Asiatic provinces, at the hands of the Persians. He grew thinner, did not sleep, and lost his relish for food. On two occasions he had acathetic jaundice. The court physicians were alarmed. Sometimes, during sleepless nights, with open eyes, he lay on his magnificent couch under the sacred Constantine Banner, the Labarum, and pondered:

"Eusebia deceived me. Had it not been for her, I would have carried out the advice of Paulus and Mercurius, would have strangled this urchin, this young viper of the house of the Flavii. What a simpleton I! I have myself warmed him in my bosom.—And who knows,—perhaps Eusebia was his mistress! . . ."

His belated jealousy made his envy still more sear-

ing,—to avenge himself upon Eusebia was no longer in his power,—she had died; his second spouse, Faustina, was a foolish, pretty little girl, whom he despised. Constantius would clutch in the dark at his sparse hair, so painstakingly becurled every morning by the barber, and would shed bitter tears. Had he not protected the Church, had he not exerted himself about the extirpation of all heresies? Had he not builded and adorned churches, had he not performed every morning, every evening, the designated prayers and genuflections? And what was the upshot? What his reward?—For the first time in his life the earthly potentate was waxing indignant against the Heavenly Potentate. Prayer died away on his lips.

In order to slake his envy even a little, he decided to resort to an extraordinary measure. Throughout the large cities of the Empire "triumphal" missives were distributed, entwined with laurels, proclaiming the victories vouchsafed by the grace of God to the Emperor Constantius; the missives were read aloud in the public squares. To judge by these missives, one would think that the Rhine had been crossed four times not by Julian, but by Constantius,—who, however, at the very same time, at the other end of the world, was enduring defeats in the ignominious battles with the Persians; that it was not Julian who had been wounded at Argentoratum, and had taken captive King Chnodomar, but Constantius; that it was not Julian who traversed swamps and dreamy untrodden forests, breaking roads, besieging fortresses, enduring hunger, thirst, sultriness, tiring himself more than the common soldiers, sleeping less than they,—but Constantius. Not even the name of Julian was mentioned in these laurel-crowned epistles, as though there were

no Cæsar whatsoever. The people acclaimed the conqueror of Gallia,—Constantius; and in all the churches the presbyters, bishops, patriarchs said masses, beseeching long days and health for the Emperor, rendering up thanks to God for the victories over the barbarians, granted to Constantius.

But the envy devouring the heart of the Emperor would not be slaked. Thereupon he conceived the idea of taking away from Julian the best flower of his legions,—imperceptibly, by underhanded means, to deprive him of power, as he had done with Gallus on a time; to draw him most softly into his toils, and after that to deal the last blow to a man already disarmed.

With this end in view there was despatched to Lutetia an experienced official, a tribune of the notaries, Decensius, who was charged with immediately withdrawing from the troops of the Cæsar his best auxiliary legions,—the Heruli, the Batavians, the Petulants, the Celts,—and send them to Asia, to the Emperor; besides that, he was given the task of choosing from every legion three hundred of its bravest warriors; while the tribune Cintula received an order to form a body of picked shield-bearers and gentiles, place himself at their head, and also lead them off to the Emperor.

Julian, forewarning Decensius, pointed out the danger of a mutiny among the legions, consisting of barbarians, who would sooner consent to die than to forsake their native land. Decensius paid no attention to these forewarnings, preserving an imperturbable official solemnity upon his clean-shaven and yellow crafty face.

Near one of the wooden bridges, joining the island of Lutetia with the bank, stretched out the long building of the main barracks. The agitation among the troops

had been spreading since morning. Only the strict orderliness decreed by Julian still restrained the soldiers. The first cohorts of the Petulants and Heruli had set out in the night. Their brethren, the Celts and the Batavians, were preparing for the journey.

Cintula was issuing orders in an assured voice, when suddenly grumbling arose. One insubordinate soldier had already been flogged with rods till he was half-dead. Decensius was darting about everywhere, a quill behind his ear, and his hands full of documents.

In the yard and on the road, under the inclement evening sky, stood canvas-covered carts with enormous wheels, for the wives and children of the soldiers. The women were keening, bidding farewell to their native land. Some stretched out their arms to the dreamy forests and the desolate plains; others fell upon the ground and with piteous wailing kissed it, calling it their mother, grieving for that their bones would rot in a foreign land; others still, in a submissive and silent grief, were wrapping up in a bit of rag a handful of their own land,—the land of their birth,—for remembrance. A lean bitch, so scraggy that her ribs stood out, was licking the hub of a wheel, greased with tallow. Suddenly, going off to one side and sticking her muzzle in the dust, she fell to howling. All, turning around, shuddered. A legionary angrily struck her with his foot. Tucking up her tail, yelping, she ran off into a field, and there, halting, fell to howling still more heart-rendingly, still louder.—And in the eerie silence of the inclement evening this prolonged howling was an eldritch thing to hear.

Aragaris the Sarmatian was of the number of those who were to forsake the North. He was bidding farewell to his faithful friend, Strombic.

"Little uncle, dear, whomever art thou abandoning me to! . . ." snivelled Strombic, swallowing the soldiers' porridge,—it had been yielded to him by Aragaris, who could not eat for grief; Strombic's tears ran into the porridge, but he ate it greedily, nevertheless.

"There, there, be quiet, thou fool," Aragaris consoled him, as was his wont, with contemptuous but kindly upbraiding. "There is enough of womanish howling without thee to help! . . . Better tell me, sensibly,—for thou hailest from those regions,—what sort of woods be there; do they run more to oaks, or to birches?"

"Whatever art thou saying, little uncle? God be with thee! What woods art thou speaking of? There is naught save sand and stone!"

"So? Then where do the people hide from the sun?"

"There is never a place to hide, little uncle. In a word, 'tis a desert. 'Tis as hot—in a manner of speaking—as over a stove. And there is no water."

"How? No water? Well, and is there ale?"

"What ale! They have never e'en heard of ale."

"Thou liest!"

"Damn my eyes, little uncle, if in all Asia, Mesopotamia, or Syria, thou wilt find e'en one little keg of ale or mead!"

"Well, brother, 'tis a bad pass. 'Tis hot, and no water, nor ale, nor mead. They be driving us, 'tis easy to see, to the end of the world, like steers to slaughter."

"On the devil's horns, uncle dear, straight on the devil's horns!" And Strombic fell to snivelling still more piteously.

At this juncture there was heard a distant noise and the hubbub of voices. Both friends ran out of the barracks.

Throngs of soldiers were running to the island of Lutetia over the pontoon bridge. The shouts were drawing nearer. Alarm seized the barracks. The warriors were coming out on the road, gathering and shouting, despite the commands, threats, and even the blows of the centurions.

"What has happened?" a veteran, who was carrying a faggot of brushwood to the kitchen, was asking.

"Twenty more men, so they say, have been flogged to death."

"Twenty, sayest thou?—A hundred!"

"They will flog each one in turn,—that is the order!"

Suddenly there burst into the crowd a soldier in torn apparel, his face blanched and grown insane, and fell to yelling:

"Run,—run to the castle! They have cut Julian's throat!"

These words fell like sparks upon dry straw. The long smouldering flame of mutiny flared up uncontrollably. Faces grew bestial. None understood anything, none heeded any other. All were yelling together:

"Where are the wretches?"

"Kill the villains!"

"Whom?"

"The envoys of the Emperor Constantius!"

"Down with the Emperor!"

"Eh, ye cowards,—to betray such a leader!"

The first two centurions they came upon, although absolutely innocent of any blame, they threw on the ground, trampled underfoot, and wanted to tear into pieces. Blood spurted out, and, at the sight of it, the soldiers became still more infuriated. The throng, pouring across the bridge, was drawing near the building

of the barracks. Suddenly there arose a distinct, deafening outcry:

"Glory to the Emperor Julian! Glory to Julian Augustus!"

"They have slain him! They have slain him!"

"Be still, ye fools! The Augustus is alive,—we have seen him ourselves but now!"

"The Cæsar liveth!"

"Not the Cæsar,—the Emperor!"

"Who was it said he was slain, then?"

"Where is the wretch?"

"They wanted to slay him!"

"Who did?"

"Constantius!"

"Down with Constantius! Down with the cursed eunuchs!"

Some one on a horse galloped past in the twilight at such a pace that they barely managed to recognize him.

"Decensius! Decensius! Stop the assassin!"

The clerkly quill was still stuck behind his ear; the travelling ink-horn still dangled at his belt. Followed by laughter and cursing, he vanished.

The throng was growing. In the darkness of the evening the mutinying troops were ominously agitated and a-hum. Their fury changed to the rapture of urchins when they saw that the legions of the Petulants and the Heruli, despatched in the morning, had turned back, having also rebelled. Many were embracing their compatriots, their wives and children, as after a long parting. Some wept for joy. Others, with outcries, smote their swords against resounding shields. Camp-fires were laid and kindled. Strombic, who had in his youth been a buffoon in a show-booth at Antioch, felt an influx of

inspiration. His comrades lifted him up in their arms, and, making theatrical gestures, he began:

"*Nos quidem ad orbis terrarum extrema ut noxii pellimur et damnati,*—we are being sent off to the end of the world, like evil-doers, like the condemned; our families, whom we have redeemed from bondage at the price of our blood, shall fall anew under the yoke of the Alemanni."

He had barely finished, when they heard piercing yelps, coming from the barracks, as though a suckling pig were being stuck, and, together with these yelps, came the strokes of the rod upon a bare body,—sounds well-known to the soldiers; the warriors were flogging the execrated centurion, Cedo-Alteram. The soldier who was beating his superior cast aside the bloodied rod, and, amid general laughter, cried out, imitating the gay voice of the Centurion:

"Give us a new one!—*Cedo alteram!*"

"To the palace! To the palace!" hummed the crowd. "Let us proclaim Julian our Augustus,—let us crown him with a diadem!"

They all set off, throwing the centurion, half dead, weltering in a pool of blood, out into the courtyard.—A star twinkled here and there through the clouds. A dry, gusty wind was raising the dust.

The gates, the portals, the windows of the palace were shut tight; the building seemed uninhabited. Having a premonition of the mutiny, Julian had gone nowhere, scarcely showing himself to the soldiery, and was occupied with prognostications. For two days, for two nights, he had awaited miracles and manifestations. In the long, white raiment of the Pythagoreans, with a lamp in his hands, he was ascending a narrow staircase to the very

highest turret of the castle. There already stood, observing the stars, in his sharp-pointed tiara of felt wool, the Persian magus, an assistant of Maximus of Ephesus, sent by the latter to Julian,—that same Nogodares, who on a time, in the little tavern of Syrax, at the base of the Mount Argæus, had foretold to Scúdilo his fate.

"Well, what is it?" asked Julian with perturbation, casting his eye over the dark vault of heaven.

"One can see naught," answered Nogodares, "the clouds interfere."

Julian made an impatient gesture.

"Never a portent! 'Tis as if heaven and earth had conspired."

A bat flitted by.

"Look, look,—perhaps thou canst foretell somewhat by its flight."

It almost touched Julian's face with its chill, mysterious wing, and disappeared.

"'Tis a soul, akin to thee," said Nogodares in a whisper. "Remember, to-night a great event is to be consummated. . . ."

The shouts of the troops were heard; they were indistinct,—being muffled by the wind.

"If thou learnest aught, come to me," said Julian, and descended into the book-ambry. He fell to pacing the enormous hall, from corner to corner, with quick, uneven steps. At times he would pause, on the alert. It seemed to him that some one was dogging his steps, and a strange supernatural chill blew in the dark upon the nape of his neck. He would turn around quickly,—only to face emptiness; it was but his blood, heavily and uneasily agitated, pounding at his temples. He would again fall to pacing,—and again it seemed to him that some one

was rapidly, rapidly whispering in his ears words which he had not time to distinguish.

A servant entered, to announce that an old man, who had arrived from Athens on very important business, was desirous of seeing him. Julian, crying out for joy, rushed forward to meet him. He thought that this was Maximus, but was mistaken,—it was the grand hierophant of the Eleusinian mysteries, whom he was also impatiently awaiting.

"Father!" exclaimed the Cæsar. "Save me! I must know the will of the gods. Come quickly,—everything is in readiness."

At this moment around the palace resounded the deafening cries,—already near, like to a peal of thunder,—of the troops; the old walls of brick quaked. The tribune of the court shield-bearers ran in, pale with terror:

"A mutiny! The soldiers are breaking down the gates!"

Julian made an imperious sign with his hand:

"Have no fear! Later, later! Let no one enter here. . . ."

And, seizing the hierophant by the arm, he drew him along down a steep staircase into a dark cellar, and locked the ponderous door of wrought iron after him.

In the cellar everything was in readiness,—torches whose flame was reflected in the silver of the statue of Helios-Mithra, the God of the Sun; censers, sacred vessels with water, wine, and mead for libations, with flour and salt for strewing upon the sacrifices,—and, in coops, there were various birds for augury,—ducks, pigeons, hens, geese, an eagle; a white lamb, trussed up, was piteously bleating.

"Quick! Quick! I must know the will of the gods," Julian hurried the hierophant, handing him a keenly ground knife.

The old man, short of breath, hastily performed the prayers and the libations. He slaughtered the lamb; part of the flesh and the fat he laid upon the coals of the sacrificial altar and with mysterious incantations began scrutinising the pluck; with accustomed hands he was extracting the bloody liver, heart and lungs, examining them from all sides.

"One who is mighty shall be overthrown," uttered the hierophant, indicating the heart of the lamb, still warm. "A fearful death. . . ."

"Who dies?" Julian asked. "I, or he?"

"I know not."

"And thou, too, dost not know? . . ."

"Cæsar," uttered the old man, "be not hasty. This night decide on nothing. Bide till the morrow; the portents are dubious,—and even . . ."

Leaving his speech unfinished he began on another sacrifice,—a goose; then the eagle. From above there reached them the hubbub of the crowd, that was like to the tumult of an inundation. The blows of a crowbar rang against the iron gates. Julian heard nothing, and with an avid curiosity scrutinised the ensanguined viscera,—in the kidneys of a jugulated hen he hoped to behold the mysteries of the gods. The old priest, shaking his head, repeated:

"Do not come to any decision,—the gods are silent."

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed the Cæsar with indignation. "What a time they have chosen to be silent! . . ."

Nogodares entered with an exultant mien:

"Julian, rejoice! This night shall decide thy fate. Hasten, dare,—else it will be too late. . . ."

The magus looked at the hierophant,—the hierophant looked at the magus.

"Beware!" uttered the Eleusinian priest, assuming a frown.

"Dare!" spake Nogodares.

Julian, standing between them, looked now at the one, now at the other, in incomprehension. The faces of both augurs were impenetrable; they were jealous of one another, each striving for the Cæsar's favour.

"What is to be done, then? What is to be done, then?" repeated Julian in a whisper. Suddenly he recalled something, and was gladdened:

"Wait,—I have an ancient Sibylline book: *Concerning Contradiction in Auspices*. We shall refer to it!"

He ran upstairs into the book-ambry. In one of the passages he came upon Bishop Dòrotheus in sacerdotal vestments, with the cross and the Holy Eucharist.

"What is this?" questioned Julian, involuntarily stepping back.

"The Holy Viaticum for thy dying wife, Cæsar."

Dorotheus glanced intently at the Pythagorean raiment of Julian, at his pallid face with its flaming eyes, and at his ensanguined hands.

"Thy spouse," went on the bishop, "would fain see thee before death."

" 'Tis well, 'tis well; only not right now,—later. . . . O ye gods! Another ill-portent. And at such a moment! All that she doth is out of place! . . ."

He ran into the book-ambry, and fell to rummaging through the dusty scrolls. Suddenly he thought that he

heard some one's voice distinctly susurrate in his ear: "Dare! Dare! Dare!"

"Maximus! Is it thou?" cried out Julian and turned around. There was no one in the dark room. His heart was pounding so strongly that he laid his hand upon it; a cold sweat stood out on his brow.

"There is what I was waiting for," said Julian. "This was *His* voice. Now I venture forward. 'Tis final. The die is cast!"

The iron gates collapsed with a deafening crash. The soldiers burst into the atrium. The roaring of the crowd could be heard, like to the roaring of some beast, and the trampling of countless feet. The purple light of the torches flashed through a chink in the shutters, like the glow of a conflagration. Delay was out of the question.—Julian cast off his white Pythagorean raiment, donned his armour, the paludamentum of the Cæsars, and his helmet; he girt up his sword, ran up the main staircase leading to the outer doors, threw them open,—and suddenly appeared before his troops with a solemnly radiant face.

All his doubts had vanished,—in action his will had grown stronger; never yet in all his life had he experienced such inner power, clarity of spirit, and alertness. The crowd at once sensed this. His pale face appeared regal and awesome. He made a sign with his hand,—all became quiet.

He began speaking,—he urged the soldiers to become calm, assured them that he would not forsake them, would not allow them to be carried off to a foreign land, that he would be a supplicant in this matter before his "most excellent brother," the Emperor Constantius.

"Away with Constantius!" the soldiers interrupted him, shouting as one. "Away with the fratricide! Thou art the Emperor,—we want no other! Glory to Julian Augustus the Invincible!"

He skillfully played the rôle of a man amazed, even frightened: he cast down his eyes, turned his face aside, and put out his hands, raising up his palms, as though thrusting the criminal gift from him and warding it off. The cries increased in force.

"What are ye doing?" exclaimed Julian, with assumed horror. "Do not bring yourselves and me to ruin! Can it be that ye really think me capable of betraying the Most Worthy Augustus?"

"The murderer of thy father, the murderer of Gallus!" shouted the soldiers.

"Be still, be still!" he waved his arms,—and suddenly dashed down the steps of the staircase into the crowd. "Or do ye not know? Before the countenance of God himself did we take the oath . . ."

Every move of Julian was a crafty, profound dissimulation. The soldiers surrounded him. He snatched his sword out of its scabbard, raised it aloft, and directed it against his own breast:

"Bravest of men! The Cæsar shall die ere he betray . . ."

They seized his arms, forcibly taking away his sword. Men fell at his feet, embracing them with tears, and touched their breasts with the bare, sharp point of his sword.

"We shall die," they shouted, "we shall die for thee!"

Others stretched out their arms toward him, with piteous outcry:

"Be gracious to us, be gracious to us, our father!"

Grey-haired veterans got down on their knees, and, snatching at the hands of their leader, as though wanting to kiss them, inserted his fingers in their mouths, compelling him to feel their toothless gums; they spoke of their weariness, which was beyond words, of toils beyond their strength, endured throughout a long service; many took off their garments and exhibited to him bare senile bodies, wounds received in battles, backs with horrible wales from birchings.

"Be gracious! Have pity, have pity! Be our Augustus!"

Sincere tears welled up in the eyes of Julian,—he loved these rude faces, this familiar atmosphere of the barracks, this unreigned rapture, in which he felt his own strength. That the mutiny was a dangerous one he had remarked through a special sign,—the soldiers did not interrupt one another, but shouted simultaneously and unanimously, as though they had conspired; and, just as suddenly and simultaneously would they become silent,—now a uniform cry would go up, and now a sudden silence would fall.

Finally, as though unwillingly, overcome by force, he announced in a low voice:

"Beloved brethren! My children! As ye see,—I am yours for life and for death; I can refuse ye in naught. . . ."

"Crown him,—crown him with a diadem!" they set up a shout, exulting.

But diadem there was none. The resourceful Strombic proposed:

"Let the Augustus order to be brought one of the pearl necklaces of his spouse."

Julian retorted that a feminine ornament was unseemly and would be a bad sign for the beginning of the

new reign. The soldiers would not be pacified;—they must needs see the glistening ornament on the head of their elect, in order to believe him Emperor. Thereupon a rude legionary snatched from a war steed its surcingle of brass bosses,—a *phalera*,—and proposed to crown the Augustus therewith. This was found not to their liking,—the leather of the surcingle gave off an odour of equine sweat. All fell impatiently to seeking another ornament. The standard-bearer of the legion of the Petulants, Aragaris the Sarmatian, took off his neck a brazen scaly chain, an accoutrement of his calling. Julian wound it doubled around his head,—this chain made him the Roman Augustus.

"On the shield! On the shield!" shouted the soldiers.

Aragaris proffered him a round shield to stand on, and hundreds of hands raised the Emperor aloft. He beheld the sea of heads in brazen helmets, heard their triumphant cry, like to a tempest:

"Long live Augustus Julian, Augustus the Divine! *Divus Augustus!*"

It seemed to him that the will of destiny was being consummated.

The torches dimmed. Pallid streaks appeared in the east. The ungainly brick turrets of the castle showed a sombre black. Only in a single window a light burned redly. Julian surmised that this was the window of those chambers where his wife Helena lay a-dying. When, at dawning, the fatigued troops grew quiet, he went to her.

It was too late. She who had died was lying in her narrow virginal bed. All were on their knees. Her lips were sternly compressed. The chill of chastity was wafted from the emaciated monastic body. Julian, without any

twinge of conscience, but with an oppressive curiosity, looked at his wife's pale face, now tranquil, and reflected:

"Wherefore did she desire to see me before her death? What did she want to tell me,—what could she have told me?"

XXII

The Emperor Constantius was passing through sad days in Antioch. All were expectant of ill.

Of nights he had fearful dreams,—in his sleeping chamber, until the morning glow, there burned five or six bright lamps,—yet notwithstanding he dreaded the dark. He would sit long hours through alone, in motionless thoughtfulness, turning around and shuddering at every rustling.

On one occasion his father, Constantine the Great, appeared to him in a dream, holding in his arms a babe, evil and sturdy; Constantius,—so it seemed,—having taken the child from him had seated it on his own right hand, with his left trying to retain an enormous glass sphere; but the evil babe pushed off the sphere,—it fell, shattered, and the pricking needles of glass, with an unendurable pain, began to sink into the flesh of Constantius: into his eyes, into his heart, into his brain,—they sparkled, rang, cracking noisily, and seared him. The Emperor awoke in terror, bathed in cold sweat.

He fell to consulting soothsayers, celebrated wizards, oneirocritics.

Troops were gathered in Antioch, and preparations were being made for an expedition against Julian. At times the Emperor, after prolonged inertia, would be possessed by a thirst for action. Many at court found his haste unwise; in whispers they confided to one another rumours of the latest suspicious oddities and quirks of the Cæsar.

It was late autumn when he set out from Antioch.

At noonday, on the road, three thousand paces from the city, near a village called Hippokephale, the Emperor beheld the beheaded body of an unknown man; the body, turned to the west, proved to be lying to the right hand of Constantius, who was riding a horse; the head was some distance from the trunk. The Cæsar blanched and turned away. None of his attendants uttered a word, but all reflected that this was an ill omen.

In the city of Tarsus in Cilicia he felt a slight ague, as well as faintness, but paid no attention to either and did not even consult his physicians, hoping that the horseride over the difficult mountain ways in the blazing heat of the sun would induce a sweat.

He set out for a small town, Mopsuhestia, situated at the base of Mount Taurus,—the last halting place upon leaving Cilicia.

Several times during the journey he had had severe attacks of vertigo. Finally he was forced to get off his horse and take a seat in a litter. Subsequently the eunuch Eusebius told how, lying in the litter, the Emperor would take out of his raiment a precious stone, with a depiction of the late Empress Eusebia Aurelia carved thereon, and tenderly kiss it.

At one of the cross-roads he asked whither the other way led; the answer was made him that it was the road to the abandoned castle of the Cappadocian kings,—Macellum. On hearing this name Constantius frowned.

They arrived at Mopsuhestia toward evening. He was tired and his brow was clouded. No sooner had he set foot within the house prepared for him when one of his courtiers, through inadvertency, despite the prohibition of Eusebius, informed the Emperor that he was awaited

by two courtiers from the Western Provinces. Constantius ordered them to be brought.

Eusebius implored him to postpone the business till the morning. But the Emperor retorted that he felt better,—that his ague had passed, and that now he felt but a slight ache in the nape of his neck.

The first courier, trembling and pale, was admitted:

"Tell it all, at once!" exclaimed Constantius, frightened by the expression on his face.

The courier told him of the unheard-of effrontery of Julian,—the Cæsar, before his troops, had torn up the missive of the Most August; Gallia, Pannonia, Aquitania had given themselves over to him; and traitors had gone out against Constantius with all the legions stationed in these lands.

The Emperor jumped up, with a face distorted by fury; he threw himself upon the courier, cast him down, and seized him by the throat:

"Thou liest, thou liest, thou liest, wretch! There is still a God, a King in Heaven, the Protector of kings on earth. He will not allow this to pass—hearken ye, all ye traitors!—He will not allow this to pass. . . ."

Suddenly he grew weak and covered his eyes with his hand. The courier, nor dead nor alive, managed to scurry through the door.

"On the morrow," muttered Constantius dully and distractedly, "on the morrow we start off. . . . Straight over the mountains. . . . At double march, into Constantinople! . . ."

Eusebius, walking up to him, bowed servilely:

"Blessed Augustus, God hath granted to thee, His anointed, victory over all thy foes and arch enemies,—thou hast vanquished the rebellious Maxentius, Constans,

Vetranio, Gallus. Thou shalt vanquish this God-detested one as well. . . ."

But Constantius, unheeding, uttered in a whisper, shaking his head, with a vacant smile:

"This means there is no God. If but all this be truth, it means that God doth not exist. I am alone. Let any dare say He exists, when such deeds take place on earth. Long have I been pondering upon this. . . ."

He questioningly surveyed all with his turbid eyes and added incoherently:

"Summon the other one."

He was approached by a physician, a court dandy with a clean-shaven, pink, brazen face, with shifty little eyes, like those of a lynx,—an Ebrew who pretended to be a Roman patrician. He fawningly remarked to the Emperor that excessive excitement might have a bad effect upon him, that rest was necessary. Constantius merely waved him away, as one would an annoying fly.

The other courier was led in. He was a tribune of the Imperial stables, Cintula, who had escaped from Lutetia. He imparted tidings still more frightful,—the gates of the city of Sirmium were thrown open before Julian, and the inhabitants thereof received him joyously, as a deliverer of their fatherland; within two days he was bound to come out on the Roman highway to Constantinople. The last words the Emperor somehow seemed either not to have heard distinctly, or not to have comprehended. His face became strangely immobile. He gave the sign for all to withdraw. Eusebius, whom he wanted to transact business with, remained.

After some time, having felt fatigue, he ordered himself conducted into the bed-chamber, and took a few steps. But suddenly he emitted a low moan, carried both

hands up to the nape of his neck, as though he had felt a strong momentary pain, and swayed. The courtiers supported him just in time.

He did not lose consciousness,—by his face, by all his movements, by the sinews straining on his brow, one could note that he was making unbelievable efforts to speak; finally, he spake slowly, uttering each word in a whisper:

"I am fain to speak—and—can not—"

These were his last words,—he was deprived of the use of his tongue; the stroke attacked the entire right side of his body; his right arm and leg dangled down helplessly. He was carried over into a bed. In his eyes were uneasiness and an intense unextinguishable thought. He was straining to say something; to issue, perhaps, some important order; but out of his lips escaped fitfully only indistinct sounds, resembling a faint, unceasing lowing. None could understand what he wanted, and the sick man let his eyes rove over each one in turn. Eunuchs, courtiers, military commanders, slaves, —all crowded around the dying man; they longed, yet knew not how, to serve him for the last time. Occasionally angry malice would blaze up in the intelligent, intense gaze; at such times the lowing would seem angry. Finally, Eusebius surmised and brought waxed tablets. Joy flashed in the eyes of the Emperor. Tightly and clumsily, as little children do, with his left hand he seized the copper stylus. After long efforts he succeeded in bringing out on the soft layer of yellow wax a few curlycues. The courtiers with difficulty deciphered the word "baptise."

He fixed his immovable stare on Eusebius. They were all struck at not having understood before,—the Em-

peror willed to be baptised before death, since, following the example of his father, Constantine the Tolerant, he had put off this great sacrament to the last minute, believing that it could at one stroke cleanse his soul of all its sins,—"make it whiter than snow."

They rushed off in search of a bishop. There proved to be no bishop in Mopsuhestia. They summoned an Arian presbyter of the town's poor basilica. He was a timid mannikin, whom life had broken; he had a bird-like face, a peaked red nose, resembling a beak, and a pointed little beard. When they had come for him, Father Nymphidian—so was he called—was attacking his tenth goblet of cheap red wine, and seemed exceedingly jolly. They could not in any way get into his head what the matter was,—he thought that they were making mock of him. But when they had convinced him that he was confronted with the baptising of the Emperor, he had been well-nigh deprived of his reason.

The presbyter entered the room of the sick man. The Emperor glanced at the pale, distracted and trembling Father Nymphidian with such a joyous, resigned gaze, the like of which he had never bestowed on any other man in all his life. It was understood that he was apprehensive of dying and was hurrying the performance of the sacrament.

Throughout the town they sought for a golden,—or, at the least, a silvern,—font, but found it not; true, there was a magnificent vessel, with precious stones, but of a very dubious use,—it was conjectured that it had been used in the Bacchic mysteries of the god Dionysos. They preferred, after all, an indubitably Christian font,—even though old, of copper, with roughly dented edges.

The font was placed near the couch; warm water was

poured in,—at which the Ebrew physician wanted to test the water with his hand; the Emperor made a furious gesture and fell to lowing,—probably he feared that the Ebrew would desecrate the water.

His nether tunic was taken off the dying man. Stalwart young shield-bearers lifted him up lightly in their arms like a child, and plunged him into the water. Now, without any delectable emotion whatsoever, with drooping, lifeless face, he looked with wide-open, unmoving eyes at the brightly gleaming cross of precious stones over the golden Constantinian Banner, the Labarum; his gaze was intense, meaningless, like those of infants at breast, when they gaze upon a shining object and cannot draw their eyes away.

The ceremony, evidently, did not set the sick man at rest; he seemed to forget about it, somehow. For the last time his will flared up in his eyes, when Eusebius again proffered him the tablets and the stylus. Constantius could not write,—he merely traced the first letters of the name "Julian." What was the meaning of this? Did he want to forgive his enemy, or to bequeath vengeance?

He was in torment for the duration of three days. The courtiers said in a whisper to one another that he was fain to die and could not, that this was an especial visitation of God. However, all of them, through old habit, still styled the dying man "The Blessed Augustus," "Holiness," "Eternity."

Most probably he suffered. The lowing changed into a prolonged rattling, ceasing nor day nor night. These sounds were so regular, so unbroken, that it seemed as if they could issue from no human breast. The courtiers came and went, awaiting the end. Only the eunuch

Eusebius did not abandon the dying man, day nor night. The dignitary of the Most August bed-chamber in face and manner resembled an old, quarrelsome, malicious and crafty crone; many evil deeds were there upon his conscience; all the tangled threads of informations, treacheries, churchly squabbles and court intrigues had their ends meeting in his hands,—but, probably, he alone in all the palace loved his sovereign, like a faithful slave.

Of nights, when everybody would fall asleep or disperse, fatigued with the sight of sufferings too prolonged, Eusebius would not go a step from the couch; he fixed the pillow, wetted the parching lips of the sick man with icy drink; at times he would get down on his knees at the feet of the Emperor, and, in all probability, pray. When no one saw him, Eusebius, most softly turning back the edge of the purple blanket, would with tears kiss the poor, pale, benumbed feet of the dying Cæsar.

On one occasion it seemed to him that Constantius had noticed this caress and responded to it with a look,—something brotherly and tender passed fleetingly between these beings,—both malevolent, unhappy and lonely.

Eusebius closed the eyes of the Emperor, and beheld how upon his face, which for so many years had borne a supposed majesty of sovereignty, true majesty of death came to reign.

Over Constantius were to sound the words which, according to usage, the Church pronounced before lowering into the grave the remains of Roman Emperors:

"Arise, O king of earth,—come to the summons of the King of Kings, that He may judge thee."

XXIII

Not far from the mountain passes of Súccos, on the boundary between Illyria and Thrace, through a forest of beech-trees, two men were walking along a narrow road, late at night. They were the Emperor Julian and Maximus the wizard.

A full moon shone in the clear sky, and with its strange light illumined the autumn gold and purple of the leaves. At rare intervals, a yellow leaf would swish to the ground. There was wafted upon them a peculiar dankness, the odour of late autumn, inexpressibly delectable, fresh, and, at the same time, despondent and reminiscent of death. The yielding sere leaves rustled under the feet of the travellers. All about them, in the quiet forest, there reigned the pomp of a funereal splendour.

"Master," quoth Julian, "why have I not that divine lissomeness of life,—that joyousness which maketh the heroes of Hellas so splendid?"

"Art thou not a Hellene?"

Julian sighed:

"Alas! Our ancestors were savage barbarians,—the Medes. In my veins flows heavy Northern blood. I am no son of Hellas. . . ."

"Friend, Hellas has never existed," uttered Maximus, with his habitual equivocal smile.

"What dost thou mean to say?"

"That Hellas which thou lovest has never had an actual existence."

"My faith is vain?"

"It is possible to have faith," answered Maximus, "only in that which is not, but which shall be. Thy Hellas shall be,—there shall be a kingdom of god-like men."

"Master, thou dost possess mighty spells,—free my soul from fears!"

"Fears of what?"

"I know not. . . . Fear has been mine since childhood; I fear all things,—life; death; my own self; that mystery which is everywhere; the dark. I had an old nurse, Labda, who resembled a Parca; she would narrate to me the fearful legends of the House of the Flavii; she had instilled fear into me. The silly tales of old women sound ever since in my ears of nights, whenever I am alone; these silly, fearful fairy-tales shall be my ruin. Fain would I be joyous, like the great men of ancient Hellas,—yet cannot! It seems to me, at times, that I am a coward.—Master! Master! Save me! Free me from this eternal darkness and horror!"

"Let us on. I know what thou art in need of," quoth Maximus solemnly. "I shall cleanse thee of this Galilean corruption, of the shadow of Golgotha, through the radiant effulgence of Mithra; I shall warm thee after the water of Baptism with the hot blood of the God-Sun. O my son, rejoice,—I shall bestow upon thee great freedom and joyance, such as no man has ever yet had on earth."

They came out of the forest and set foot on a narrow, stony path, hewn out of the crag, over a chasm. A torrent rushed noisily below. At times a stone flew off underfoot, and, awaking an ominous, slumbrous echo, would fall into the abyss. Snows gleamed whitely on the summit of the Rhódope.

Julian and Maximus entered a cavern. This was a temple of Mithra, wherein were consecrated mysteries interdicted by the laws of Rome. No luxury was here,—merely, on the bare stone walls, carvings of the mysterious symbols of Zoroastrian wisdom,—triangles, constellations, winged monsters, intertwining circles. The torches burned dimly, and the priestly hierophants in long strange garments moved about like shades. Julian, also, was clothed with an Olympian *stola*,—a garment with Hindu dragons broidered thereon, and stars, and suns, and Hyperborean griffons; a torch was put in his right hand.

Maximus had forewarned him about the designated ritual words, with which the initiate must reply to the interrogations of the hierophant. Julian, preparing for the mystery, had learned the answers by heart, although their meaning was to be revealed to him only during the mystery itself. Down steps dug into the ground they descended into a deep and narrow elongated pit; it was stuffy and dank within it; above it was covered with a staunch wooden scaffolding with many openings, as in a sieve.

There came the clatter of hoofs on wood,—the priests placed calves on the scaffolding,—three black, three white, and one fiery-red, with their horns and hoofs gilded. The hierophants struck up a hymn, with which was mingled the piteous lowing of the animals, stricken down by two-edged axes. They fell to their knees, expiring, and the scaffolding quivered under their weight. The vaults of the cavern reverberated from the bellowing of the fiery-hued bullock, whom the priests styled the god Mithra.

The blood, oozing through the interstices of the

wooden grating, fell upon Julian as a scarlet warm dew. This was the greatest of the pagan mysteries,—the Taurobolium, the immolation of bulls dedicated to the Sun. Julian cast off his upper raiment and put his nether white tunic, his head, his arms, his face, his bosom, all his members, under the streaming blood, under the drops of the living, fearful rain. Thereupon Maximus, the chief priest, shaking his torch, uttered:

"Thy soul is being washed with the redeeming blood of the God-Sun, the most pure blood of the eternally-joyous heart of the God-Sun, with the evening and the morning effulgence of the God-Sun.—Hast thou fear of aught, mortal?"

"I fear life," answered Julian.

"Thy soul is being liberated," continued Maximus, "from every shadow, from every horror, from every bondage, with the wine of divine rejoicings, the red wine of the turbulent rejoicings of Mithra-Dionysos.—Hast thou fear of aught, mortal?"

"I fear death."

"Thy soul is becoming part of the God-Sun," ejaculated the hierophant. "Mithra the unuttered, the ungraspable, is taking thee for a son,—blood of His blood, flesh of His flesh, spirit of His spirit, light of His light.—Hast thou fear of aught, mortal?"

"I fear naught," responded Julian, ensanguined from head to foot. "I am even as He."

"Receive, then, the wreath of joy," and Maximus tossed from the point of a sword an acanthus wreath upon Julian's head.

"The Sun alone is my wreath!" exclaimed the neophyte, tearing the wreath off his head. He cast it upon the ground, and again spake:

"The Sun—alone—is my wreath!"

He trampled it underfoot, and a third time, raising his arms toward the heavens, exclaimed:

"Henceforth and unto death,—the Sun alone is my wreath!"

The mystery was ended. Maximus embraced the initiated. Upon the lips of the old man still flitted the self-same equivocal and uncertain smile.

When they were returning by the forest path, the Emperor turned to the wizard:

"Maximus, it seems to me at times that thou keepest silent about the chiefest thing of all. . . ."

And he turned upon him his face, pale, with red maculations of the sacramental blood, which, according to custom, must not be rubbed off.

"What wouldst thou know, Julian?"

"What shall be my lot?"

"Thou shalt conquer."

"And what of Constantius?"

"Constantius is no more."

"What art thou saying? . . ."

"Wait. The sun shall irradiate thy glory."

Julian durst not question him further. They returned to the camp in silence.

In his tent a courier from Asia Minor was awaiting Julian. It was the tribune Cintula. He got down on his knees and kissed the hem of the Imperial paludamentum.

"Glory to the blessed Augustus Julian!"

"Art from Constantius, Cintula?"

"Constantius is no more."

"What?" Julian shuddered, and threw a glance at Maximus, who preserved an imperturbable equanimity.

"Through the will of Divine Providence," went on

Cintula, "thy enemy expired in the town Mopsuhestia, not far from Macellum."

On the evening of the following day the troops were called together. They already knew of the death of Constantius. Augustus Claudius Flavius Julian ascended a cliff, so that all the troops might behold him,—sans wreath, sans sword and armour, clad only in purple from head to foot; in order to conceal the traces of blood, which must not be washed off, the purple was drawn over his head, falling upon his face. In this strange garb he resembled a high priest rather than an emperor.

Behind him, up the slope of the Hæmus, beginning with the precipice whereon he stood, the withering forest glowed redly; over the head of the Emperor a yellowed maple, like a golden banner, rustled and glinted against the blue heavens. To the very edge of the sky the Thracian plain spread out; through it wound the ancient Roman road, laid with broad slabs of white marble,—smooth, flooded with the sunlight, as though it were a triumphal path, it ran to the very waves of the Propontis, on to Constantinople, the Second Rome.

Julian gazed upon his troops. When the legions stirred, blood-red flashes of lightning flared up, from the sinking sun, upon their brazen helmets, armour and eagles; from the sun the tips of the spears above the cohorts glowed, like tapers. Maximus was standing next to Julian. Bending over to Julian's ear, he whispered to him:

"Behold, what glory! Thy hour has come. Delay not!"

He pointed to the Christian banner, the Labarum, the sacred Gonfalon, made for the Roman soldiery on the manner of that fiery Banner, with its inscription: *By This Shalt Thou Conquer,* which Constantine the Tolerant had, in a vision, beheld in the sky.

The trumpets fell silent. Julian uttered in a loud voice:

"My children! Our toils are ended. Render thanks unto the Olympians, who have bestowed victory upon us."

These words were heard distinctly only by the first ranks of the troops, where there were many Christians; confusion sprang up among them.

"Did ye hear? 'Tis not the Lord he thanketh, but the gods of Olympus," one soldier was saying.

"Dost see the old man with the white beard?" another was pointing out Maximus to his comrade.

"Who is it?"

"The Devil himself, in the form of Maximus the Enchanter,—he it was, his own self, that did tempt the Emperor."

But the individual voices of the Christian warriors were a mere whisper. From the distant cohorts, standing in the back, who had not heard the words of Julian clearly there was going up an enraptured cry:

"Glory to the divine Augustus,—glory, glory!"

And, ever louder and louder, from all the four quarters of the plain, covered with legions, there rose up the cry:

"Glory! Glory! Glory!"

The mountains, the earth, the air and the forest shook from the voice of the throngs.

"Look, look,—they are lowering the Labarum!" The Christians were horrified.

"What is this? What is this?"

The ancient military Gonfalon, one of those that had been consecrated by Constantine the Great, was dipped toward the feet of the Emperor.

Out of the forest came a soldier-blacksmith with a

portable forge, soot-covered pincers, and a pot used for carrying lead; all this, with purpose unknown, had been prepared beforehand.

The Emperor, pale, despite the reflection of his purple and the sun, wrenched off the pole of the Labarum the golden cross, and the monogram of Christ wrought of precious stones. The troops were rooted to the spot. The pearls, the emeralds, the rubies were scattered, and the slender cross, pressed into the damp ground, bent under the sandal of the Roman Cæsar.

Maximus took out of a magnificent little casket, wrapped up in folds of blue silk, a little silvern carving of the god of the Sun, Mithra-Helios.

The smith approached; in a few instants he skilfully straightened out with his pincers the bent hooks atop the pole of the Labarum, and soldered on with lead the carving of Mithra.

Before the troops had time to recover from horror, the Sacred Gonfalon of Constantine, surmounted with the idolatrous image of Apollo, was swishing and soaring above the head of the Emperor.

An old warrior, a pious Christian, turned away and covered his face with his hands, that he might not behold this abomination.

"Sacrilege!" he babbled, paling.

"Woe!" a third whispered in the ear of a comrade. "The Emperor has apostatized from the Church of Christ."

Julian got down on his knees before the Banner, and, stretching forth his arms toward the silver statuette, cried out:

"Glory to the invincible Sun, the sovereign of the gods! Now the Augustus bows before the eternal Helios,

the God of Light, the God of Reason, the God of Joyousness and of Olympian Beauty!"

The last rays of the sun were reflected on the pitiless countenance of the Delphic idol; his head was surrounded with sharp-pointed rays of silver; he was smiling.

The legions were speechless. There fell a silence, such that one could hear how, in the forest, one after the other, the dead leaves swished to the ground.

And, in the bloody reflections of the evening, in the vermeille raiment of the last of the regal priests, in the purple of the sere forest,—in all these there was an ominous, funerary pomp, the grandeur of death.

Some one of the soldiers in the front ranks uttered so loudly that Julian heard and gave a shudder:

"Antichrist!"

PART SECOND

I

ALONGSIDE of the stables, in the hippodrome at Constantinople, was located a compartment, something in the nature of a dressing room,—for the grooms, equestriennes, mimes and charioteers. Here lamps, suspended from the vaultings, smoked sootily, even in the daytime. The stifling air, permeated with the odour of manure, breathed upon one with the warmth of stables.

Whenever the hanging upon the doors was thrown back, the blinding light of morning would burst in. In the sunny distance one could see the empty benches for the spectators; the majestic staircase, joining the Imperial loge with the inner chambers of the palace of Constantine; the monolithic arrows of the Ægyptian obelisks; and, in the centre of the yellow, smooth sand, a Titanic sacrificial altar, of three intercoiled brazen serpents,—their flat heads supported a Delphic tripod of superb workmanship.

Occasionally from the arena there would float in the snapping of a whip, the cries of the equestrians, the snorting of heated steeds, and the swish of wheels upon the smooth sand, that was like to the swish of wings.

All this was not a race, but merely the preparatory exercise to the real games, set to take place in the Hippodrome in a few days.

In one corner of the stable a nude athlete, anointed with oil, covered with the dust used by gymnasts, with a leathern belt around his loins, was lifting up and

lowering iron weights; throwing back his curly head, he would bend his back so that his joints cracked, his face turned blue, and the taurine sinews were strained on his thick neck.

Accompanied by slaves, a young woman walked up to him; she was robed in a showy morning stòla, drawn over her head, and falling in folds over her thin, thoroughbred face, already losing its bloom. She was a zealous Christian, loved by all clerics and monks for her generous contributions to monasteries, for her plenteous alms; the widow of a Roman senator, she had recently arrived from Alexandrea. At first she kept her adventures secret, but soon perceived that to unite a love for the church with a love for the circus was deemed the latest thing among the worldly exquisites. All knew that Stratonica detested the dandies of Constantinople, becurled and berouged, pampered and capricious, even as she. Such was her nature,—she united the most precious Arabian perfumes with the agitating hot-house atmosphere of the stable and the circus; after hot tears of repentance, after a soul-shaking confessional before skilled confessors, to this diminutive woman, as fragile as a bijou turned out of ivory, the coarse caresses of some celebrated horseman were a necessity.

Stratonica contemplated the exercises of the athlete with the air of one who appreciated all the fine points of his craft. Preserving a stolid solemnity on his taurine face, the gymnast paid no attention to her. She was whispering something in the ear of a female slave, and, with a simple-minded wonder, having become absorbed in the contemplation of the mighty bare back of the athlete, admired the rippling of fearsome Herculæan

muscles beneath the coarse, reddish-brown skin of his enormous shoulders, when, unbending and slowly taking in the air into his lungs, as into a blacksmith's bellows, he would lift up the iron weights over his animal-like, meaninglessly handsome head.

The curtain was thrown back, a crowd of spectators ebbed back, and two young Cappadocian mares, a black and a white, flew into the stable, together with a young equestrienne, who dextrously, with a peculiar guttural cry, was jumping from one horse to the other. She turned a final somersault in the air and jumped off to the ground,—just as strong, smooth-skinned and frisky as her young mares; drops of sweat were visible upon her bare body. Uttering a pleasantry, and nimbly mincing, there approached her a young, modishly garbed hypodeacon of the Basilica of the Holy Apostles, Zephyrinus,—a great *amateur* of the circus, a judge of horse-flesh, and a *habitué* of the races, who wagered enormous stakes on the colours of "the blues" against "the greens." He had on creaking, red-heeled half-boots of morocco. With his eyes underlined, his face whitened, and his head painstakingly curled, Zephyrinus resembled a young girl rather than a servant of the church. Behind him stood a slave, loaded down with all sorts of packets, little bundles, boxes with woven stuffs,—all purchases made in fashionable shops.

"Cròcala, here is the identical perfume that thou didst ask for three days ago."

With a polite bow the hypodeacon proffered to the equestrienne an exquisite little jar, sealed with blue wax.

"I have been running about the shops the whole blessed morning. Just managed to find it! The purest

of nard! 'Twas brought yestreen out of Apamea."

"But what purchases be these?" Cròcala evinced her curiosity.

"Some silk with the latest fashionable design,—all sorts of ladies' bagatelles."

"All for thine . . ."

"Ay, ay,—all for my most devout sister, the pious matron Blezilla. For we must always help our near kin. She relies upon my taste in the choice of stuffs. Since dawn I have been running about doing her behests. I have run off my feet. But I murmur not,—nay, nay, I murmur not. Blezilla is, verily, such a kindly woman,—such a holy woman, I may truly say!"

"Ay, but 'tis a pity she is old," Cròcala burst into laughter. "Ho, boy,—wipe the sweat off the black mare, as fast as thou canst, with fresh fig leaves."

"Age, too, hath its advantages," retorted the hypodeacon, rubbing, with a self-satisfied air, his white, well-cared-for hands with their precious rings. Then he asked, whispering in her ear:

"To-night?"

"I know not, truly. Mayhap . . . why, dost thou want to bring me aught?"

"Fear not, Cròcala,—I shall not come empty-handed. There is a small piece of Tyrian purple, of a lilac shade. What a design,—if thou didst but know!"

He puckered up his eyes, brought two fingers up to his mouth, kissed them, and smacked his lips.

"Well, one could simply rave gazing on't!"

"Where didst thou get it?"

"In the shop of Sirmic, of course,—near the Baths of Constantius; what dost thou take me for? Thou couldst make of it a long *tarantinidion!* Do but imagine what

is broidered along the hem! Well, now, what dost thou think it is?"

"How should I know? Flowers, beasts?"

"Neither flowers nor beasts, but, in gold with varicoloured silks, the whole history of the cynic Diogenes, the beggar sage that dwelt in a tun!"

"Ah, it must be pretty!" cried out the equestrienne. "Come, come, without fail. I shall expect thee."

Zephyrinus glanced at the water clock, a clepsydra, standing in a wall niche, and began to hurry.

"I am late! I have still to run in at a certain usurer's on some business for another matron, and to a jeweller's, and to the patriarch, at the church, for the service.—Farewell, Cròcala!"

"Look thou, then, do not deceive me," she cried after him and threatened him with her finger. "Thou scalawag!"

The hypodeacon, with his purchase-laden slave, vanished, his morocco half-boots creaking.

There ran in a horde of grooms, equestrians, dancing girls, gymnasts, boxers, tamers of wild beasts. With a metal net-work guard on his head, the gladiator Mirmillon was bringing to a white heat on a brazier a thick iron rod for the taming of a newly received African lion; the low intermittent roaring of the beast could be heard behind the wall.

"Thou wilt bring me to the grave, grand-daughter, and thyself to eternal perdition. O-ho-ho, but my back aches! I have no more strength!"

"Is it thou, grandfather Gniphon? What art thou forever snivelling about?" uttered Cròcala with vexation.

Gniphon was a little old man, with crafty, teary little eyes, glittering from beneath their grey brows,—the latter, in their mobility, resembling two white mice; his nose, of a darkly livid hue, was like a ripe plum; on his legs were Lydian breeches, motley with patches; on his head wobbled a Phrygian cap of felt,—in the form of a nightcap, with a sharp-pointed tip bent over in front and two flaps for the ears.

"Hast shambled over for money?" Cròcala waxed wroth. "Drunk again!"

" 'Tis a sin for thee to say such things, grand-daughter. Thou shalt be held accountable for my soul before God. Just think of what thou hast brought me to! I am now living in the environs of The Fig-Trees, renting a little basement from a maker of idols. Every day I behold how out of marble he hews—God forgive me!—the accursed images. Dost think 'tis an easy matter for a good Christian? Eh? In the morning one scarce opes one's eyes, when one already hears a *toc, toc, toc:* 'tis the landlord pounding away with a mallet on the stone; and there come out, one after the other, the abominable white devils, the accursed gods,—as though they were a-mocking of me, a-mugging their shameless phizzes! What else is left save to sin,—to drop into an inn out of grief and take a drop? O-ho-ho! Lord, have mercy upon us sinners! I wallow in pagan abomination, even as a swine in the rotting straw of its sty. And yet I know that an account of all will be asked of us,—all, down to the last quadrans.—But, I ask,—who is to blame? Thou! Thou dost not throw thy money around, grand-daughter, and yet, when it comes to a poor old man, thou wouldst not—"

"Thou liest, Gniphon," retorted the girl, "thou art not

at all poor, thou miser! Thou hast a jug under thy bed. . . ."

Gniphon in horror fell to brandishing his arms:

"Be still, be still!"

"Dost know whither I am bound?" he added, in order to change the subject.

"Probably to the inn again."

"There, now, 'tis for no inn, but somewhat worse,—to the idol-temple of Dionysos himself! The temple, since the time of the blessed Constantine, is cluttered up with rubbidge. But on the morrow, at the most august command of Cæsar Julian, it is opening anew. So I up and hired myself out to clean it out. I know that I shall send my soul to perdition and shall be cast down into Gehenna. Yet notwithstanding, I was tempted. Inasmuch as I be naked, and poor, and enhungered. No help have I from my own grand-daughter! That is what I have lived to see!"

"Leave me alone, Gniphon,—thou hast wearied me; here, take this, and betake thyself off. Dare not to come to me drunk again!"

She threw him several small coins, then jumped up on a half-wild Illyrian stallion, a sorrel, and, standing on his back, snapping a long whip, again flew off into the hippodrome. Gniphon, pointing to her and clicking his tongue with delight, exclaimed proudly:

"With my own hands have I given her food and drink, bringing her up!"

The strong, nude body of the equestrienne glistened in the morning sun, and her rufous hair, floating in the wind, was of the same hue as the hide of her stallion.

"Ho, Zotic," Gniphon shouted to an old slave who was picking up manure in a wattle basket, "come thou

with me to clean the temple of Dionysos. Thou art a master at that sort of work. I shall give thee three oboli."

"Why not,—let us go," answered Zotic, "only let me fix a little lamp for my goddess, right now."

This was Hippona, the goddess of grooms, of stables, and of manure. Roughly hewn out of wood, sooty, hideous, resembling a stump, she stood in a dank, dark embrasure in the wall. Zotic, the slave, who had grown up in the midst of horses, held her holy, prayed to her with tears, adorned her uncouth black feet with fresh violets, believed that she made him whole, no matter what his ailment, and that she would preserve him in life and in death.

Gniphon and Zotic came out on the plaza, the Forum of Constantine,—circular, with a double row of pillars, and with triumphal gates. In the middle of the plaza, upon a marble pediment, reared up a Titanic pillar of porphyry; at its summit, at a height of more than a hundred and twenty ells, flashed the bronze sculpture of Apollo, the creation of Phidias, pillaged from a certain city in Phrygia. The head of the ancient god of the Sun was knocked off, and, with the barbarians' lack of taste, to the trunk of the Hellenic eidolon had been affixed the head of the Christian emperor, Constantine the Tolerant; his brow was surrounded by a nimbus of golden rays; in his right hand Apollo-Constantine held a sceptre,—in his left, the globe of authority. At the pediment of the Colossus could be seen a little Christian chapel, modelled after the Palladium. Not so long ago, during the reign of Constantius, divine services had been held within it. The Christians justified themselves by the fact that in the bronze torso of Apollo, in the very

bosom of the Solar God, was enclosed a talisman, a small piece of the Most True Cross of the Lord, brought by St. Helena from Jerusalem.—Emperor Julian had closed up this chapel.

Zotic and Gniphon set foot into a narrow, long street, which led directly to the Chalcedonian Stairs, not far from the Haven. Many buildings were still a-building, others were being rebuilt, inasmuch as they had been erected, to please Constantine, the builder of the city, with such haste that they had tumbled down. Below, passers-by dashed hither and yon; buyers, slaves, litter-bearers, crowded around the shops; chariots rumbled by; while above, on the wooden scaffoldings for the carpenters, hammers beat their tattoo, blocks creaked, sharp saws whined against hard white stone; workmen on ropes lifted up enormous beams, or quadrangular blocks of Proconnesian marble, glistening against the azure of the sky; there was the smell of the dampness of new houses, of lime not yet dry; fine white dust sifted down upon heads; and here and there, amid the blindingly bright, sun-flooded, just whitened walls, sparkled in the distance of the lanes the ætherially blue, laughing waves of the Propontis, with sails that were like to the wings of sea-gulls.

Gniphon overheard in passing a snatch from the talk of two labourers, soiled from head to foot with alabaster cement, which they were mixing in a big vat.

"Wherefore didst thou adopt the faith of the Galileans?" one was asking.

"Judge for thyself," answered his comrade, "the Christians have not twice, but five times as many, holidays. No man is his own enemy. And I advise thee to go

and do likewise. There is far more leisure with the Christians!"

At a crossing a crowd of people squeezed Gniphon and Zotic to the wall. In the middle of the street some chariots had jammed together, and there was nor riding nor walking by; one heard cursing, shouts, the snapping of whips, the drivers urging their beasts. Twenty pair of strong oxen, bending their heads to their yokes, were dragging a pillar of jasper on an enormous cart with ponderous heavy wheels of stone, resembling millstones. The earth reverberated from the rumbling.

"Whither are ye carting it?" asked Gniphon.

"From the basilica of St. Paul to the temple of the goddess Hera. The Christians had carried this column off as plunder; now 'tis being returned to its old place."

Gniphon turned around to look at the dirty wall near which he was standing; pagan gamins had drawn upon it in charcoal blasphemous caricature of the Christians,—a man with an ass's head spread on a cross. Gniphon spat in disgust.

Near a certain densely populous mart they remarked on a wall a depiction of the Emperor Julian, with all the symbols of Imperial sovereignty; Hermes, the winged god, holding a caduceus, was descending towards him out of the clouds; the picture was new,—its pigments were not yet dry. According to Roman law, every one who passed by the sacred portrayal of the Augustus had to honour it by an inclination of the head. A supervisor of the mart,—an agoranome,—had detained a little crone with a basket of beets and cabbages.

"I do not bow down before the gods," wept the little crone. "E'en my father and mother were Christians. . . ."

"Thou wert bound to bow not to the gods, but to the Emperor," retorted the supervisor.

"Ay, but the Emperor is together with a god. How then am I to bow to him alone?"

"And what affair is that of mine! Thou art told to bow down. E'en wert thou to bow down to the god, thy head would not fall off."

Gniphon hastily pulled Zotic away.

"A fiendish subterfuge!" grumbled the old man. "Either bow down before the accursed Hermes, or else be guilty of *læsa majestas*. There is no getting by them. O-ho-ho, these be the times of Antichrist! The Devil is raising up a storm of cruel persecution. One can't turn around without committing some sin. . . . I look at thee, Zotic, and am eaten up with envy; thou livest with thy manure goddess Hippona, and never a grief hast thou."

They drew near the temple of Dionysos. Next to the idol-temple was situated a cloister of Christian monks, the windows and gates of which were closely barred with locks and iron bolts, as though before an invasion of enemies; the pagans accused the monks of pillaging and defiling their temple. Gniphon and Zotic, when they had set foot within it, beheld iron-smiths, carpenters, stone-masons, busied with renovating and repairing the damaged portions of the edifice. They were breaking off half-rotted planks with which the quadrangular aperture in the roof had been boarded up. A sunbeam fell through the dark air.

"Cobwebs,—look ye, what a quantity of cobwebs!"

Between the Corinthian wreaths of the capitals of the marble pillars hung whole nets of transparent, dusty-grey tissue. Besoms were attached to long poles and

they fell to sweeping off the cobwebs. A bat, disturbed, fluttered out of its crevice and began darting about, not knowing where to hide from the light, bumping into all the corners, swishing its bare wings. Zotic was raking through heaps of rubbish on the floor and carrying it off in a wattle basket.

"Look, now, what filth the accursed ones have piled up!" the old man was grumbling under his nose, upbraiding the Christians, the defilers of the temple.

A bunch of ponderous, rusted keys was brought and the treasure-chamber opened. Everything valuable had been looted by the monks; the costly stones from the sacrificial chalices had been extracted; the embroideries of gold and purple had been torn off the vestments. When one magnificent priestly chasuble was unrolled, a cloud of moths, of an aureate straw colour, flew out of its folds. At the bottom of a metal thurible Gniphon beheld a handful of ashes,—the remnants of myrrh, burnt, before the conquest of the Galilean, by the last priest, during the last offering of sacrifice. From all this sacred paraphernalia,—these poor rags and broken vessels,—there was wafted the odour of death, the mildew of ages, and some gentle, melancholy fragrance,—the incense of the dishonoured gods. A sweet despondency penetrated to the heart of Gniphon,—he recalled something and smiled; mayhap, he had recalled his youth, the tasty barley wafers, baked with honey and cumin; the white daisies of the field and the yellow dandelions, which he, with his mother, had brought to the humble altar of some rustic goddess; he had recalled the lisping of childhood prayers,—not to a distant, heavenly God, but to the little gods of this earth, who bore a sheen from the touch of human hands, and were turned out of

common beech-wood: the domestic Penates he had been born to.—And, growing sorry for the gods who had died, he heaved a heavy sigh. But he immediately recalled himself and whispered, making the sign of the cross: " 'Tis a fiendish visitation!"

The workmen brought in a heavy marble plate, an ancient bas-relief, looted many years ago and found in the adjacent hovel of an Ebrew cobbler. This bas-relief, set in among bricks, had served the cobbler for the repair of his half-ruined oven. Old Philumena, the wife of a neighbouring woolster, a most pious Christian woman, hated the wife of the cobbler,—the accursed Jewess would time and again let her ass into the cabbage patch of the woolster's wife. The feud between these neighbour-women had endured for many years. Finally, the Christian woman came off victorious: under her guidance the workmen burst into the house of the cobbler, and, in order to take out the bas-relief from the kitchen hearth, had had to break up the oven. This was a cruel blow to the cobbler's wife. The poor cook, brandishing an oven-fork, was calling the vengeance of Jehovah upon the heads of the infidels; she tore her sparse, grey hair, and piteously howled over her over-turned cooking-pots and the ruined hearth. The little Jews squawked, like fledglings in a plundered nest. But the bas-relief was, notwithstanding, transferred to its former place.

Philumena was scrubbing it; it had become all black from the malodorous smoke; greasy streams of Hebraic stews defiled the white Pentelician marble. The woolster's wife was heartily rubbing with a wet rag the delicate stone,—and little by little, from under the stenchful kitchen soot, came out the austere, divine

countenances of the ancient sculpture,—Dionysos, youthful, naked, chaste; half-recumbent, he had let his hand droop with its chalice, as though tired out at a feast; a panther was licking the heel-tap of the wine; and the god, who bestowed joyousness to all things living, with a benignant and sage smile, contemplated the power of the wild animal being tamed by the sacred power of the wine.

The stone-masons were raising the plate on ropes, in order to fasten it in its former place.

Before the very eidolon of Dionysos a master goldsmith was standing on a folding wooden ladder, and was setting into the dark eye-sockets two translucently blue sapphires,—these were the eyes of Dionysos.

"What is this?" asked Gniphon, with a timid curiosity.

"Dost thou not see? These be his eyes."

"So, so. . . . But whence came these little stones?"

"From the monastery."

"But how did the monks allow it?"

"How else but allow it! The blessed Augustus himself did command it. The radiant een of the god served as an ornament for the raiment of the Crucified. That's how it is,—these Christians are forever dinning into one's ears about compassion, about justice, yet they themselves are the first to turn robbers.—Look, the little stones have fitted to the least jot in their old place!"

The god who had regained sight gazed with his glittering sapphire orbs upon Gniphon. The old man stepped back and crossed himself, seized by terror. Repentance was torturing him. Sweeping off the dust, he talked with himself, through an old habit of his:

"Gniphon, Gniphon, thou art but a sorry mannikin, a worthless cur! Well, what wilt thou do with thyself

in the extremity of thy years? Wherefore hast thou sent thyself to perdition? The Crafty One did confuse thy steps, did seduce thee with an accursed gain. And thou shalt go into the eternal flame, and there is no more salvation for thee. Thou hast defiled thy body and thy soul, Gniphon, with the abomination of idols. 'Twould have been better hadst thou e'en never seen the light of day! . . ."

"What art thou grumbling about, grandfather?" Philumena, the woolster's wife, asked him.

"My heart grieveth,—oh, but it grieveth!"

"Thou art a Christian, art thou not?"

"What sort of Christian am I,—I am worse than any Jew; no Christian am I, but one that sells Christ for a piece of silver!" But he still went on sweeping off the dust with zeal.

"But dost thou want me to?—I shall take the sin off thee, and there shall be naught foul about thee? For I am a Christian woman myself,—and yet never a fear have I. Would I have gone on such work if I knew not how to cleanse myself?"

Gniphon glanced at her with mistrust. The woolster's wife, having looked about her and become convinced that none would overhear them, said in a whisper, with a mysterious air:

"There is such a remedy! Aye. I must tell thee that a certain holy ancient did present me with a small bit of an Ægyptian tree, yclept *persis;* this tree doth grow at Hermopolis, in Thebaïd. When the Infant Jesus and the Most Holy Virgin were entering the gates of the city upon a she-ass, the tree persis did bend down before them to the very earth, and since then it hath power to work miracles,—it doth make whole the ailing. From that

tree have I a small chip, and from that chip I shall divide off a splinter for thee. There is such beneficent power therein! Such beneficent power, that wert thou to put the smallest bit of it in a large vat of water overnight, towards morning all the water will have become holy, and there shall be in it a power to perform miracles. With that there water do thou wash thyself from head to foot, and the abomination of idols upon thee shall be as though it had never been,—in all thy joints shalt thou feel an ease and a cleanliness. And it is said in the Writ: 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' " [19]

"Benefactress!" Gniphon vociferated. "Do thou save me, accursed that I am,—give me of this tree!"

"The only thing is, 'tis dear. Well, let it go,—I shall let thee have some for a drachma."

"Whatever art thou saying, mother of mine,—be compassionate! I have not had a drachma stay with me since the day I was born, all at one time. Wouldst let it go for five oboli?"

"Eh, thou miser!" the woolster's wife spat with indignation. "He begrudges a drachma! Can it be that thy soul is not worth a drachma?"

"Come, now—will I be cleansed?" Gniphon voiced his doubts. "Mayhap the defilement has stuck to me so that it will no longer peel off?"

"Thou wilt be cleansed!" retorted the old woman with unshakable assurance. "Now thou art like a stenchful cur. But as soon as thou wilt sprinkle thyself with that there holy water,—the scabs shall fall off of thy soul, and it will shine forth with the purity of a dove."

II

JULIAN arranged a Bacchic procession in Constantinople. He was seated in a chariot harnessed with white steeds; in one hand he held a golden thyrsos, crowned by a cedarn cone, the symbol of fertility; in the other a chalice, entwined with ivy; the rays of the sun, falling on its crystal bottom, were reflected blindingly, and it seemed that the chalice was full to its brim with the sunlight, as with wine. Alongside of the chariot walked tame panthers, sent to him from the Isle of Serendib. The bacchantes sang, striking tympani, brandishing lit torches; and through the cloud of smoke one could see youths, with the goat-horns of satyrs attached to their foreheads, pouring wine into chalices out of jugs; they jostled one another, laughing; and frequently the scarlet stream, falling past the goblet on the naked, round shoulder of some bacchante, would scatter in spray. Upon an ass rode a pot-bellied old man,—the court treasurer, a great knave and taker of bribes,—who represented Silenus. The bacchantes sang, pointing to the young Emperor:

> "Bacchus, thou sittest surrounded
> With a cloud eternally splendid!"

Thousands of voices chimed in on the Chorus from *Antigone:*

> "Come to us, O offspring of Zeus!
> Come to us, O god that art the leader
> Of enflaming choruses,
> Of midnight luminaries!

With noise, and songs, and shouting,
And with a frenzied throng
Of maids enraptured,
Who glorify Bacchus by dancing,—
Come to us, thou god of joyance!"

Suddenly Julian heard laughter, a feminine squealing, and a quavering senile voice.

"Ah, thou, my little pullet! . . ."

It was the priest, a mischievous little ancient, who had pinched a comely little bacchante on her bare white elbow. Julian frowned and summoned the old clown to him. The latter came running to him, dancing and limping.

"My friend," Julian whispered in his ear, "preserve a seemly dignity, such as befits thy age and rank."

But the priest looked at him with such an amazed expression that Julian involuntarily fell silent.

"I am a man simple, unlearned,—I will venture to inform Thy Majesty that I understand philosophy but little. But the gods I do revere. Ask whom thou wilt. In the days of cruel persecutions by the Christians I remained faithful to the gods. But then,—he, he, he!—when I set my eyes upon a comely little girl, I can not bear it,—all my blood bubbles up! For I am an old he-goat! . . ."

Seeing the displeased countenance of the Emperor, he suddenly stopped, assumed an important mien, and became still more stupid.

"Who is that girl?" asked Julian.

"The one carrying a basket with sacred vessels on her head?"

"Aye."

"A hetæra from a suburb of Chalcedonia."

"What? Can it be that thou hast permitted a hetæra to touch with her impure hands the most sacred vessels of the god?"

"But then, thou thyself, Most Honoured Augustus, didst command the procession to be arranged. Whom were we to take? All the gentlewomen are Galileans. And nary a one of them would have consented to set off half-naked upon such a spectacle."

"Then that means that all of them are—"

"Nay, nay, how can that be! Here be also dancing girls, and female mimes, and equestriennes from the hippodrome. Look how gay they be,—and unashamed! The people like that. Do thou believe me, an old man, now! That is all they need. . . . And here is a gentlewoman."

This was a Christian, an old maid in search of suitors. Upon her head reared up a wig, in the form of a helmet, —a *galerum*,—made of Germannic hair, at that time celebrated for its quality,—sprinkled over with gold powder; entirely behung, like an idol, with precious stones, she was pulling a tiger-skin over her weazened, senile bosom, shamelessly whitened, the while she coyly smiled.

Julian, with repugnance, looked intently into the faces. Funambulists, drunken legionaries, bought women, hostlers from the circus, acrobats, pancratiasts, mimes,— were waxing frenzied all about him.

The procession entered a lane. One of the bacchantes, on her way, ran into a filthy eating house; from thence came an oppressive odour of fish, fried in rancid oil. The bacchante came out carrying three oboli's worth of fat cookies, and fell to devouring them greedily, licking her lips and fingers; then, having finished, wiped her

hands against the purple silk of her garment, given out for the festival from the court treasury.

The chorus of Sophocles had palled. The voices, hoarse, had struck up a song of the city squares. To Julian all this seemed a vile and stupid nightmare. A drunken Celt stumbled and fell,—his comrades began picking him up. In the crowd were caught two petty pickpockets, who were excellently playing the rôle of fauns; the petty thieves defended themselves,—a fracas sprang up. The panthers deported themselves best of all,—and had more beauty than all the others.

Finally the procession drew near the temple. Julian got down from the chariot.

"Can it be," he reflected, "that I shall stand before the sacrificial altar of the god with all this riff-raff?"

A chill of revulsion was darting through his body. He gazed upon the bestial faces, grown savage, emaciated by depravity, seeming dead through their whitening and rouge; he gazed upon the pitiful nudity of human bodies, made hideous by anæmia, scrofula, fasts, the horror of the Christian hell; the air of lupanaria and of inns surrounded him; upon his face was wafted, through the aroma of the incense, the breath of the rabble, saturated with the odour of dried fish and sour wine. Petitioners were stretching rolls of papyrus towards him from all sides.

"I was promised a place as an hostler,—I did abjure Christ yet did not receive it!"

"Forsake us not, blessed Cæsar,—protect us, be gracious to us! We did abandon the faith of our fathers, that we might please thee. If thou forsake us, whither shall we go?"

"We have fallen into the devil's paws!" some one began vociferating in despair.

"Keep still, thou fool,—what art thou yelling thy head off for?" But the chorus began its chant again:

"With noise, and songs, and shouting,
And with a frenzied throng
Of maids enraptured,
Who glorify Bacchus by dancing,—
Come to us, thou god of joyance!"

Julian entered the temple and glanced at the marble sculpture of Dionysos,—his eyes found rest from human hideousness upon the pure visage of the divine body. He no longer noticed the crowd; it seemed to him that he was alone,—alone, as a man might be who had fallen into a pack of beasts.

The Emperor began performing the sacrificial offering. The people looked on with wonder as the Roman Cæsar, the Grand High Priest, *Pontifex Maximus*, in his zeal did that which was supposed to be done by servants and slaves,—splitting the wood, bearing faggots of brushwood on his shoulders, dipping up the water in the well-spring, cleaning the sacrificial altar, scraping out the ashes, blowing up the fire. A dancer on the tight-rope remarked in a whisper into the ear of his neighbour:

"Look thou, how he bustleth. He loveth his gods!"

"I should say so," remarked a boxer, dressed as a satyr, adjusting the goat's horns on his forehead, "another doth not love his father and mother as much as he doth the gods."

"Dost see, he is blowing up the flames, with his cheeks all puffed up," another was laughing most softly. "Blow, blow, my dear fellow,—naught will come of it. 'Tis

too late,—thy uncle Constantine did put the fire out!"

The flame blazed up and illumined the face of the Emperor. Having dipped the sacred sprinkler of horse-hair in a shallow bowl of silver, he spattered the crowd with the sacrificial water. Many puckered up, others shuddered, feeling the cold drops upon their faces. When all the rites were concluded, he recalled that he had prepared a philosophical sermon for the people.

"Men!" he began, "The god Dionysos is the great beginning of the freedom within your hearts. Dionysos rends all earthly fetters, laughs at the strong, liberates the slaves. . . ."

But he beheld such incomprehension upon their faces, such tedium, that the words died away upon his lips; in his heart were rising up a deathly nausea and repugnance. He gave the signal for the spear-bearers to surround him. The crowd was dispersing, discontented.

"I shall go to a church and repent! Mayhap they will forgive me," one of the fauns was saying, malevolently tearing off his false beard and horns.

" 'Twasn't e'en worth while sending my soul to perdition!" remarked a strumpet with indignation.

"Whoever hath need of thy soul,—'twould not fetch as much as three oboli."

"They took me in!" some drunkard set up the shout. "They did but smear my lips and no more. Ugh, the accursed devils!"

In the sacristy of the temple the Emperor washed his face and hands, cast off his magnificent Dionysian dress, and clothed himself in the simple, fresh tunic, as white as snow, of the Pythagoreans.

The sun was setting. He was waiting for the dark to come, in order to return to the palace unperceived. From

the back-doors of the temple Julian stepped into the immemorial grove of Dionysos. Here silence reigned; there was but the humming of bees, the tinkle of a rill from a well-spring.

Steps were heard. Julian turned around. The newcomer was a friend of his, one of the favourite disciples of Maximus,—the young Alexandrean physician Oribasius. They walked on together over the grass-grown path. The sun penetrated through the broad, aureate leaves of the grape-vines.

"Look," said Julian with a smile, "here the great god Pan still liveth."

Then he added in a lower voice, bowing his head:

"Oribasius, didst see? . . ."

"Aye," answered the physician, "but, mayhap thou thyself art at fault, Julian? What didst thou desire?"

The Emperor kept silent. They approached a ruin, entwined with grape-vines,—it was a diminutive temple of Silenus, demolished by the Christians. Fragments were scattered over the thick grass. Only a single column, with a delicate capital, resembling a white lily, survived erect. The reflection of the setting sun was expiring upon it. They sat down on the marble plates. There was the pleasant fragrance of mint, wormwood, and cumin. Julian parted the grasses and indicated an ancient, broken-off bas-relief:

"Oribasius, that is what I desired! . . ."

Upon the bas-relief was depicted an ancient Hellenic *theoria*,—a sacred festal procession of the Athenians.

"Here is what I desired,—this beauty!—Wherefore, from day to day, do men wax more hideous? Where are they,—these godly ancients, these austere heroes, these proud youths, these pure women in white fluttering gar-

ments? Where is this strength and joy? Ye Galileans! Ye Galileans! What have ye wrought? . . ."

With eyes full of infinite sadness and love he gazed upon the bas-relief, thrusting apart the thick grasses.

"Julian," asked Oribasius quietly, "dost thou believe Maximus?"

"I do."

"In all things?"

"What wouldst thou say?" Julian raised wondering eyes upon him.

"I have always thought, Julian, that thou art suffering with the self-same ailment as thy foes, the Christians."

"Which?"

"A faith in miracles."

Julian shook his head.

"If there be no miracles, no gods, all my life is madness.—But let us not speak of this. As for my love of rites and prognostications,—do not judge me too severely. How to explain it to thee, I know not. Old, foolish songs move me to tears. I love the evening more than the morn, the autumn more than the spring. I love all that is evanescent. I love the fragrance of withering flowers. What am I to do, then, my friend? Such have the gods created me. This delectable sadness, this aureate and enchanted crepuscule, is a necessity to me. *There,* in distant antiquity, is something unutterably beautiful and dear, which I no longer find anywhere. *There* is the glow of the evening sun upon marble grown yellow from age. Take not away from me this mad love for that which no longer is! That which has been is more splendidly beautiful than all that is. Over my soul remembrance hath greater sway than hope. . . ."

He fell silent, and pensively, with a tender smile, gazed into the distance, leaning his head against the column that had remained whole, with its delicate capital, resembling a broken white lily; the last ray had already expired upon it.

"Thou speakest like an artist," replied Oribasius. "But the reveries of a poet are dangerous, when the fate of the universe lies in his hands. He that reigns over people,—must he not be greater than a poet?"

"Who could be greater?"

"The creator of a new order of life."

"The new, the new!" exclaimed Julian. "Truly, at times I fear your new things! The new seems to me chill and cruel, like death. I tell thee,—my heart is in the old! The Galileans also seek the new, spurning the ancient holy things. Believe,—the new is only in the old, but not in that which is becoming old; 'tis in that which has died but is immortal; in the desecrated,—in the beautiful!"

He rose to his full height, with a face pale and proud, with his eyes blazing:

"They think Hellas has died! Lo, from all the ends of the world, the black monks, like black ravens, are flocking together towards the white marble body of Hellas, and greedily pecking it, like carrion; and they wax merry, and caw: 'Hellas has died!' But Hellas can not die. Hellas is here,—within our hearts. Hellas is the god-like beauty of man upon earth. It shall awaken,—and woe be then unto the Galilean ravens!"

"Julian," uttered Oribasius, "I feel frightened for thee,—thou wouldst perform the impossible.—The ravens do not peck a living body, while the dead are

never resurgent. Cæsar, what if the miracle be not consummated?

"I fear naught,—my ruin shall be my salvation," exclaimed the Emperor, with such joy that Oribasius involuntarily shuddered, as though the miracle were about to be consummated. "Glory to the rejected, glory to the vanquished!"

"But, ere I perish," he added with a haughty smile, "we shall wrestle a while longer! I fain would have my foes worthy of my hatred, but not of my contempt. Truly do I love mine enemies, for that I can be conquering them. In my heart is Dionysian joy: Now is the ancient Titan arising and rending his chains, and once more is the Promethean fire being kindled upon earth. The Titan—against the Galilean! And so I come, to give unto men such liberty, such gaiety, as they never durst e'en dream of. Galilean, thy kingdom is vanishing, like a shadow. Rejoice, ye tribes and nations of the earth. I am the harbinger of life, I am the liberator,—I am the Antichrist!"

III

In the adjacent monastery, with its closely barred shutters and gates, resounded the devotions of the friars; from afar there floated in the tumult of Bacchic festivity,—in order to drown it, the monks joined their voices in a piteous outcry:

"O God, why hast thou cast *us* off forever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? . . .[20]

"Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

"Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people." [21]

A new, an unexpected significance did the ancient words of Daniel take on:

"And thou didst deliver us into the hands of lawless enemies, most hateful forsakers *of God,* and to an unjust king, and the most wicked in all the world." [22]

Late at night, when everything in the street had grown quiet, the friars dispersed to their cells.

Brother Parthenius could not fall asleep. His was a pale, kindly face; when he spoke with people, in his large eyes, as pure as those of a young girl, there would be an expression of sad incomprehension; however, he spake but little, inarticulately, as though with a heavy effort; then, too, he almost always uttered such childish, unexpected things, that one could not hear him without smiling; at times he would laugh without cause, and

when the austere monks would ask: "What art thou baring thy teeth for and making the devil happy?"—he would explain timidly that he was laughing "At his own thoughts"; this made everybody still more convinced that he was an innocent.

But Brother Parthenius was possessed of a great art,—he could illuminate the initials of books with cunning designs. His art furnished not only money but respect and glory to the monastery,—even in lands far away. He himself knew this not, and, even were he capable of understanding the meaning of mortal glory, he would have been thrown into fright, rather than rejoicing, over it.

Painting, which occasionally cost him heavy toil,—since he brought the least details to the last limits of perfection,—he did not deem labour, but repose; he did not say: "I am going to work,"—but always requested of Pamphilius, the abbot, an old man who tenderly loved him: "Father, bless thou my repose."

Upon finishing some detail, some most exquisite scroll of a drawing, he would clap his palms and extol himself. He loved so much the solitude and quiet of night that he learned to work even by artificial light; the resultant pigments were odd, but this was no detriment to the fabulous designs.

In his tiny cell with its overhanging vaults Parthenius lit a clay lamp and set it upon a shelf, next to little jars, fine brushes, and boxes of pigments for cinnabar, for liquid silver and gold. He crossed himself, cautiously dipped his brush, and began outlining the tails of two peacocks at the head of a title-page; the golden peacocks against a field of emerald were drinking out of a turquoise spring; they had lifted up their beaks and

stretched forth their necks, as birds do when they drink.

All around him lay other rolls of parchment with unfinished designs. Here was a whole supernatural universe; around the engrossed pages twined ætherial, faëry buildings, trees, vines, animals. Parthenius did not think of aught when he did create them, but radiance and joyousness descended upon his pallid face. Hellas, Assyria, Persia, India and Byzantium, and the dim breaths of future worlds,—all nations and all ages were simple-heartedly combined in a monkish paradise, with all the colours of precious stones playing around it, making splendid the capital letters of the Holy Writ.

John the Baptist was pouring water upon the head of Christ; while alongside of him the pagan god Jordan, with an inclined amphora trickling water, amiably, as the ancient host of these regions, held a towel in readiness, that he might offer it to the Saviour after His baptism.

Brother Parthenius, in simplicity of heart, had no fear of the ancient gods; they made him gay; they seemed to him long since converted to Christianity. On the summit of knolls he would place a mountain god, in the form of a nude youth; whereas, when he was drawing the passage of the Judæans through the Red Sea, a woman with oar in hand depicted the Sea, while a naked man,—βυθός being of the masculine gender in Greek—was supposed to designate the Abyss, which was swallowing up Pharaoh; on the shore sat The Desert,—in the guise of a sad-mienced woman in a tunic of sand-yellow colour.

Here and there, in the arched neck of a steed, in the fold of a long garment, in the manner in which the good-souled mountain god leaned on his elbow, or the way the

god Jordan offered the towel to Christ, there was a glimmering, dimly seen, of Hellenic exquisiteness, of the beauty of the nude body.

On that night this "play" did not divert the artist. The ever tireless fingers shook; the customary smile was absent from his lips.—He listened attentively, opened the box on a stand of cypress wood, took out a sharp awl used in book-binding, crossed himself, and, shielding the flame of the lamp with his hand, walked out of the cell with exceeding softness. In the passageway it was quiet and stuffy; one could hear the buzzing of a fly, caught in a web.

Parthenius descended into the church. A single lamp flickered before an ancient diptych, an image made of ivory. Two large, elongated sapphires in the aureole of the Infant Jesus in the arms of the Mother of God had been extracted by the pagans and restored to their former place in the temple of Dionysos. The black, hideous hollows in the ivory, which from age was slightly tinged with yellowness, seemed to Parthenius wounds in a living body, and these sacrilegious wounds made the heart of the artist wax indignant. "Lord, help Thou me!" he uttered in a whisper, touching a hand of the Infant Jesus. In a corner of the church he sought out a rope ladder,—the friars used it in lighting the lamps in the cupola. He took up this ladder and set out towards a narrow, dark passageway, which ended at the outer door. The red-cheeked, stout brother in charge of cells, Choricius, was snoring on some straw. Parthenius glided past him like a shadow. The lock upon the door opened with a canorous ring. Choricius raised himself, blinked his eyes, and again tumbled back on the straw.

Parthenius climbed over the low enclosure. The street

of the forsaken suburb was deserted. A full moon shone in the sky. The sea surged noisily. He drew near that side of the temple of Dionysos where the shadow lay, and threw his rope ladder upward so as to have one end of it catch upon the brazen acroterion at the corner of the temple. The ladder swung down from the uplifted taloned paw of a Sphinx. The monk climbed up on the roof. Somewhere, very far off, the early cocks began their chant; some dog burst out barking. Then silence fell again,—save for the noise of the sea. He threw the ladder over and descended into the interior of the temple.

Here utter soundlessness reigned. The pupils of the god, two translucently blue, elongated sapphires, turned directly upon the monk, shone with an awesome life in the glistening of the moon. Parthenius shuddered and crossed himself.

He climbed up on the sacrificial altar. A little while ago Julian, the head priest, had been blowing up a fire upon it. Parthenius' soles felt the warmth of the ashes, not yet grown cold. He took the awl out of the bosom of his frock. The orbs of the god sparkled near, at his very face. The artist beheld the care-free smile of Dionysos, all his marble body, flooded with lunar refulgence, and was lost in admiration of the ancient god.

Then he fell to work, attempting to extract the sapphires with the sharp point of the awl. Frequently his hand, despite his will, spared the delicate marble. Finally his work was finished. The blinded Dionysos ominously and piteously turned upon him the black sockets of his eyes. Horror seized Parthenius,—it seemed to him that some one was spying upon him. He jumped down from the sacrificial altar, ran up to the rope ladder, clambered up it, and let it hang down on the other side,

without even fastening it properly, so that, when he was climbing off the lower rungs, he lost his foothold and fell. Pale, dishevelled, in soiled garments, but still clasping the sapphires tightly in his hand, he darted, like a thief, across the street into the monastery.

The porter's sleep was unbroken. Parthenius, having opened the door, silently slipped through and entered the church. Having glanced at the image, he was reassured. He tentatively inserted the sapphire een of Dionysos in the dark hollows,—the stones could not have fitted better in their old place, and again glowed warmly, meekly, in the halo of the Infant Jesus.

Parthenius returned to his cell and lay down in bed. Suddenly, in the darkness, all curled up and covering his face with his hand, he burst into soundless laughter, like that of children who have been up to mischief-making, and who rejoice at their mischief, yet fear lest their elders find out. He fell asleep with this laughter in his soul.

The morning waves of the Propontis were sparkling through the latticed gratings of the little window when Parthenius awoke. The pigeons upon the window-sill, cooing, beat their dark-blue wings. The laughter still remained in his soul. He approached his work-table and with joy glanced at an unfinished little picture in an initial letter. It represented the Paradise of God,—with Adam and Eve sitting in a meadow. A ray of the rising sun fell through the window directly upon this picture, and it glittered with paradisaical glory,—gold, purple, azure. Parthenius, working, did not remark that he was imparting to the nude body of Adam the ancient, Olympian splendour of beauty of the god Dionysos.

IV

THE celebrated sophist, the court teacher of eloquence, Hekebolius, had begun from the lowest rungs his ascent up the ladder of governmental ranks. He had been a chore-boy neophyte in the Temple of Astarte at Hieropolis. At sixteen, having stolen several precious objects, he had run away from the temple to Constantinople, had gone through all sorts of hardships, had been a vagabond on the highways, both with the pious pilgrims, and with a robber band of the castrated priests of Dindymene, the many-breasted goddess, the favourite of the rabble, carried about the hamlets upon an ass. Finally, he had contrived to get into the school of Prœresius the rhetorician, and soon, in his own turn, had become a teacher of eloquence. During the latter years of Constantine the Great, when the Christian faith had become the vogue at court, Hekebolius had adopted Christianity. Men of the spiritual calling bore an especial inclination towards him; he paid them in the same coin.

Frequently, and always apropos, Hekebolius changed his profession of faith, depending whence the wind blew,—now from Arianism he would pass over to orthodoxy, then again from orthodoxy to Arianism; and every time such a transition would serve as a new rung in the ladder of governmental rank. The persons of spiritual calling nudged him on most discreetly, and he in his turn helped them to clamber upward.

His head was becoming adorned with grey hairs; his corpulence was becoming more and more pleasing; his sage speeches more and more ingratiating and persuasive; while his cheeks were growing ever comelier through that freshness which is the ornament of age. His eyes were kindly; but occasionally there would flare up in them an evil, piercing mockery,—an intellect daring and cold; on such occasions he would lower his eyelashes,—and the spark that had flared up would expire. The entire appearance of the celebrated sophist had attained a shading of churchly seemliness.

He was a strict keeper of fasts and, at the same time, an exquisite gastronome,—the tasty lenten dishes of his table were more choice than the most luxurious ones of meat, even as the monastic jests of Hekebolius were more pungent than the most frank pagan ones. At his table was served a cooling drink of the juice of sugar beets, spiced with condiments,—many asserted that it had a better bouquet than wine; instead of ordinary wheaten bread he had invented especial lenten wafers from seeds growing in deserts, upon which seeds, according to legend, St. Pachomius had nourished himself while in Ægypt.

Evil tongues asserted that Hekebolius was a nympholept. It was told that once a young woman had admitted at confessional that she had been unfaithful to her husband.—" 'Tis a great sin! But whom was it with, my daughter?" the confessor had asked her. "With Hekebolius, father." The face of the priest lightened: "With Hekebolius! Ah, well, he is a man saintly and zealous for the Church. Repent my daughter,—the Lord will forgive thee."

During the reign of Emperor Constantius he had received the post of court rhetorician with a splendid salary, the senatorial *laticlave*,[28] and an honourary baldrick of blue over his shoulder,—the distinguishing mark of superior officials. But, at the exact instant when he was preparing to take the final step upward, there fell a bolt from the blue,—Constantius died; Julian, the hater of the Church, ascended the throne. Hekebolius did not lose his presence of mind; he did as others did, but more cleverly than the others, and, chiefest of all, in time, not too late and not too early.

On one occasion Julian,—still in the first days of his power,—had arranged a theological contest in the palace. A young philosopher and physician, a man held in general esteem for his straightforwardness and nobility, Cæsarius of Cappadocia, brother of the famous father of the Church, Basil the Great, had come forth as defender of the Christian faith against the Emperor. Julian admitted full freedom in such learned disputes, liked to have himself opposed, disregarding court ceremony. The dispute was heated; the gathering of sophists, rhetoricians, priests and fathers of the Church was multitudinous. The disputant would usually submit, if not to the arguments of Julian the Hellenic philosopher, then to the majesty of Julian the ruler of Rome, and would yield. But this time the matter came out differently: Cæsarius would not yield. He was a youth whose motions had a beauty like those of a maiden's, he had silky curls; his innocent eyes were filled with an imperturbable radiance. He styled the philosophy of Plato "the cunningly woven wisdom of the Serpent," and opposed thereto the heavenly wisdom of the Evangel.

Julian knit his eyebrows, turned away, bit his lips, and barely constrained himself. The dispute, like all sincere disputes, ended in naught.

The Emperor walked out of the gathering with a philosophical jest, assuming a kindly air, somewhat tinged with all-forgiving sorrow,—in reality with a shaft of envy at heart. At this moment he was approached by the court rhetorician, Hekebolius; Julian deemed him an enemy. Hekebolius fell down on his knees and launched forth into a repentant confessional,—long had he been wavering already, but the arguments of the Emperor had convinced him conclusively; he cursed the sombre Galilean superstition; his heart had turned back to the recollections of his childhood, to the radiant gods of Olympus. The Emperor, as he raised up the old man, could not speak from emotion,—he could but press the sophist to his bosom with all his might, and kiss him upon his clean-shaven, soft cheeks, his succulent, red lips. Julian's eyes sought Cæsarius,—the Emperor was fain to taste fully the sweets of his victory.

For the duration of several days Julian would not let Hekebolius leave his side, telling opportunely and inopportunely of the miraculous conversion; was proud of his convert, even as a priest is proud of a festal sacrifice, or a child of a new toy. He desired to bestow upon him an honourable post at court, but Hekebolius refused, deeming himself unworthy of such honour, and stating his intention to prepare his soul for Hellenic wisdom by lengthy ordeal and repentance, to purge his soul of Galilean impiety by service to some one of the ancient gods. Julian appointed him high priest over Bithynia and Paphlagonia. A person bearing this rank was styled *archiereus* by the pagans.

Archiereus Hekebolius governed two densely populated Asiatic provinces, and travelled his new path with the same success as the old. He co-operated in the conversion of many Galileans into the Hellenic faith. He became chief priest of the famous temple of the Phœnician goddess Astarte-Atergatis,—the very same whom he had served in his childhood. The temple was situated halfway between Chalcedon and Nicomedia, on a high promontory jutting out into the waves of the Propontis,—the place was called Gargara. Hither flocked pilgrims from all ends of the world,—the worshippers of Aphrodite-Astarte, goddess of death and of voluptuousness.

V

In one of the spacious halls of the palace at Constantinople Julian was busied with affairs of state. Between the porphyry columns of the covered way gleamed the pale blue sea. He was seated before a circular marble table, cluttered with rolls of papyrus and parchment. Occasionally one heard the scraping of the quills of Ægyptian reed, plied by logographers, their heads bent over their tasks. The faces of the officials were sleepy,—they were not accustomed to rising so early. A short distance away, the new archiereus Hekebolius, and Junius Mauricus, an official,—a court dandy with a jaundiced, dry and clever face, with squeamish creases about his thin lips,—were conversing in whispers.

Junius Maricus, amid the prevalent superstition, was one of the last worshippers of Lucian, the great scoffer of Samosata, the creator of caustic dialogues, who made mock of all the sacred things of Olympus and Golgotha, of all the legends of Hellas and of Rome.

In an even voice Julian was dictating a missive to the chief priest of Galatia, one Arsacius:

"Allow not the priests to frequent spectacles, or drink at inns, or occupy themselves with degrading trades; reward the obedient, punish the disobedient. Establish in each city hostels, where our largesses may be availed of not only by Hellenes, but by the Christians as well, and by the Judæans, and by the barbarians. For disbursement, every year, to the poor in Galatia, we designate thirty

thousand measures of wheat, sixty thousands cisterns of wine; one-fifth part distribute to the poor living in the temples; the remainder, to wayfarers and beggars,—'twould be a disgrace to deprive the Hellenes of assistance, when the Judæans have no beggars at all, whereas the godless Galileans feed both their own and ours, even though they act as men who deceive children with tid-bits,—they begin with hospitality, with compassion, with invitations to evenings of love, which they style Mysteries, and, little by little, inveigling believers into impiety hateful to the gods, they wind up with fasts, flagellations, tortures of the flesh, the horror of hell, madness, and cruel death; such is the usual way of these misanthropes, that do style themselves philadelphians. Conquer them through compassion, in the name of the eternal gods. Declare throughout all the towns and hamlets that such is my will; explain to the citizens that I am ready to come to their aid in any matter, at any hour. But if they would draw down my especial favour,—let them incline their minds and hearts, whole-souledly, toward the Mother of Gods,—Dindymene of Pessinus; may they render up to her honour and glory, through all eternity."

The last words he had added in his own hand.

In the meanwhile breakfast had been served,—common wheaten bread, fresh olives, light white wine. Julian drank and ate without tearing himself away from work; but suddenly he turned around, and, indicating the golden platter with the olives, asked his beloved old slave, brought from Gaul, who always waited upon him at table:

"Wherefore this gold? Where is the former dish, of clay?"

"Forgive me, sire,—'twas broken."

"Into smithereens?"

"Nay, merely the very edge."

The slave ran off and brought the clay platter with its edge chipped off.

" 'Tis naught,—'twill serve for a long while yet," said Julian, and smiled a good-natured smile. "I have noticed, my friends, that broken things serve longer and better than new ones. I confess, 'tis a weakness of mine,—I grow accustomed to old things; for me they hold a peculiar charm, like that of old friends. I fear innovation, I hate change; the old one is always sorry for,—even though bad; the old is homey and lovable. . . ."

He started laughing at his own words:

"Do ye see what reflections come to one at times, all because of a broken dish of clay!"

Junius Mauricus plucked the hem of Hekebolius' garment:

"Didst hear? Therein is his whole nature,—he is equally solicitous about his broken platters and his half-dead gods. Behold, that is who decides the destinies of the universe! . . ."

Julian became engrossed; from edicts and laws he passed on to projects for the future,—in all the cities of the Empire he proposed to institute schools, cathedras, lectures, expositions of Hellenic dogmas, prescribed specimens of prayer, apothegms, philosophical sermons, sanctuaries for those who liked chastity, for those who dedicated themselves to meditation.

"How likest thou that?" whispered Mauricus in the ear of Hekebolius. "Monasteries in honour of Aphrodite and Apollo! Matters get harder from hour to hour! . . ."

"Yea, my friends, we shall fulfill all this with the aid

of the gods," concluded the Emperor. "The Galileans would fain assure the universe that the attribute of compassion is theirs alone; but compassion is an attribute of all philosophers, no matter what gods they revere. I have come to promulgate to the universe a new love, not a slavish and superstitious one, but free and a joyous, like the heaven of the Olympians! . . ."

He took them all in with a searching glance. That which he sought for was absent from the faces of the officials.

Delegates from the Christian teachers of rhetoric and philosophy entered the hall. Recently there had been published an edict, interdicting the Christian teachers from giving instruction in Hellenic eloquence; the Christian rhetoricians had either to abjure Christ, or to leave the schools.

With a roll in his hands one of the delegates walked up to the Augustus,—a thin little man, confused, resembling an old moulted parrot; he was accompanied by two uncouth and red-cheeked school-boys.

"Take compassion upon us, most beloved of the gods!"

"What do they call thee?"

"Papirian,—a citizen of Rome."

"Well, now, dost thou see, my dear Papirian, I do not wish ye any ill. On the contrary. Remain Galileans."

The old man fell on his knees and embraced the Emperor's feet.

"For forty years have I been teaching grammar. I know Homer and Hesiod as well as any one does. . . ."

"What is thy request?" uttered the Augustus, assuming a frown.

"I have six children, sire,—each one smaller than the other. Take not my last crust away. My pupils like me.

Inquire of them. For am I teaching them aught evil? . . ."

Papirian could not continue from excitement; he was pointing to his two pupils, who knew not where to hide their hands, and stood with their eyes popping out, blushing fast and furious.

"Nay, my friends!" the Emperor cut him short, quietly and firmly. "The law is just. I deem it incongruous that Christian teachers of rhetoric, while expounding Homer, should also deny the self-same gods whom Homer revered. If ye think that our sages did weave but fables,—it were better for you to betake yourselves to churches, and expound Matthew and Luke! Mark ye, Galileans,—I do this but for your own good. . . ."

In the throng of rhetoricians some one muttered under his breath:

"For our own good shall we perish from hunger!"

"Ye fear to defile yourselves with sacrificial meat or sacrificial water,—ye Christian teachers," the Emperor went on imperturbably. "How is it, then, that ye fear not to defile yourselves by that which is more dangerous than any meat or water,—by false wisdom? Ye say: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Be poor in spirit, then. Or think ye that I know not your teaching? O, I know it better than any one of ye! I see in the Galilean testaments such profundities as ye have not e'en dreamt of. But every man to his own: do ye leave to us our vain wisdom, our poor Hellenic learning. What need have ye of these contaminated well-springs? Ye have a higher wisdom. Ours is the kingdom of earth, yours is the kingdom of heaven. Just think,—the kingdom of heaven doth not suffice for such resigned and non-resisting folk as you! Dialectics do but arouse a desire for free-think-

ing heresies. Verily so! Be ye even as simple as children. Is not the blessed ignorance of the fishermen of Capernaum higher than all Platonic dialogues? All the wisdom of the Galileans consists but of one thing: 'Believe!' Were ye real Christians, ye would have blessed my law. 'Tis not the spirit that is now indignant within ye, but the flesh, to which sin is sweet.—That is all I have to say to ye, and I hope you will excuse me, and agree that the Roman Emperor is more concerned for the salvation of your souls than ye are yourselves."

He passed through the knot of rhetoricians, calm and pleased with his speech. Papirian, still on his knees, was tearing his sparse grey locks.

"Wherefore? Mother in Heaven, wherefore dost thou suffer this to pass?"

Both pupils, seeing the grief of their preceptor, were rubbing their bulging eyes with uncouth red fists.

VI

The Emperor remembered the endless dissensions of the orthodox Christians and the Arians, which had taken place at the conclave at Milan, during the reign of Constantius. He conceived the idea of taking advantage of this enmity for his own ends, and decided to convoke, after the manner of his Christian predecessors, Constantine the Great and Constantius, an ecclesiastical council.

On one occasion, in a frank conversation, he had announced to his amazed friends, that, instead of all oppressions and persecutions, it was his wish to give the Galileans full freedom in their profession of faith, to recall from exile the Donatists, Semi-Arians, Marcionites, Montanists, Cecilians, and other heretics, exiled through the decrees of councils held during the reigns of Constantine and Constantius. He was convinced that there was no better means of bringing the Christians to their downfall. "Ye shall see, my friends," said the Emperor, "when they all return to their former places, there shall blaze up such dissension among these philadelphians that they shall tear each other to pieces like feral beasts, and shall give over to ignominy the name of their Teacher, far quicker than I could attain that end through the cruelest persecutions!"

Through all the ends of the Roman Empire he despatched orders and missives, granting the exiled churchmen permission to return without fear. There was proclaimed full freedom in the profession of faith. At the

same time the wisest Galilean teachers were invited to the court at Constantinople for a certain consultation upon matters ecclesiastical. The greater part of those invited did not know in full detail either the purpose of the conclave, nor of whom it would be composed, nor its full powers, since all these details were set forth in the letters with intentional vagueness. Many, surmising the craftiness of the Apostate, under the pretence of ill-health or too great a distance, did not appear at all in answer to the call.

The blue sky of morning seemed dark by comparison with the blindingly white marble of the double row of pillars surrounding the great court,—the Atrium of Constantine. White pigeons, with a joyous silken swishing of their wings, vanished in the sky, like flakes of snow. In the centre of the court, amid the radiant sprays of a fountain, could be seen the Aphrodite Callipygos;[24] the humid marble glistened like silver, seeming like a living body. The monks, whenever they passed by her, would avert their faces, and tried not to see her; but she was still in their midst, sly and tender.

Not without a secret intention had Julian chosen such a strange place for the ecclesiastical council. The dark garments of the monks appeared still darker here, the faces of the embittered heretics-exiles, emaciated by privations, still more sorrowful; like black, hideous shades they glided over the sunny marble. All felt ill at ease, each strove to assume an air of indifference, even of self-reliance, pretending not to know his neighbour, an enemy whose life he may have spoiled, or who may have spoiled his; but, in the meanwhile, by stealth, they cast malignant, searching glances at each other.

"Most Pure Mother of God! What is this, then? Into

what have we fallen?" the exceedingly aged, corpulent Bishop of Sebaste, Eustaphius, was voicing his agitation. "Let me go,—let me go! . . ."

"Quieter, my friend," the chief of the court spear-bearers, the barbarian Dagalaiph, was placating him, politely keeping him away from the door.

"No participant am I in an heretical council. Let me go!"

"At the will of the Most Gracious Cæsar, all those who have come to the council . . ." retorted Dagalaiph, restraining the bishop with undeviating kindness.

" 'Tis no council, but a den of brigands!" Eustaphius waxed indignant.

Among the Christians were to be found some merry fellows who made fun of the provincial air, the asthma, and the Armenian accent of Eustaphius. He grew altogether crest-fallen, quieted down, and wedged himself in a corner, merely repeating with despair:

"Lord! Wherefore has this been visited upon me? Wherefore? . . ."

Evander of Nicomedia was also repenting that he had come hither and brought the novice of Didimus, brother Juventinus,—the latter had just arrived in Constantinople.

Evander was a great dogmatist, a man of penetrating and profound intellect; in poring over books he had lost his health, had grown prematurely old; his vision had weakened; in his near-sighted good-natured eyes there was a constant expression of weariness. Countless heresies besieged his intellect, giving him no rest, tormenting him when awake, appearing to him in his sleep; but, at the same time, they attracted him with their seductive refinements and casuistries. He had been gath-

ering them during many years in an enormous manuscript under the title of *Against the Heretics,* just as heartily as certain amateurs gather monstrous rarities. He sought out with avidity new ones, invented non-existent ones, and, the more furiously did he controvert them, the more entangled in them did he become. At times, with despair, he would pray God for a simple faith, but God would not bestow simplicity upon him. In every-day life he was pitiful, trusting, and as helpless as a child. It was no effort for evil folk to deceive Evander—about his absent-mindedness there were current many laughable stories.

Through absent-mindedness had he come to this ludicrous council also; partly drawn, as well, by the hope of getting knowledge of some new heresy. Now Bishop Evander was constantly puckering up his face and shielding his weak eyes with his palm from the sun and the marble,—both too bright. He did not feel his proper self; he longed to go back as soon as possible to his half-dark cell, to his books and manuscripts. Juventinus he would not let leave his side, and, while scoffing at the different heresies, guarded him from temptation.

Through the middle of the hall passed a squat old man, with broad cheek-bones, with a crown of grey, downy hair,—the septuagenarian Bishop Purpurius, an African Donatist, recalled by Julian from exile. Neither Constantine nor Constantius had succeeded in suppressing the heresy of the Donatists. Rivers of blood had been spilt because of the fact that, fifty years back, in Africa, Donatus had been irregularly ordained instead of Cecilianus,—or, on the contrary, Cecilianus instead of Donatus,—no one could very well make head or tail of this matter; but the Donatists and the Cecilians massa-

cred one another, and there was no end in sight of the fratricidal feud, which had sprung up not even because of two opinions, but because of two names.

Juventinus remarked how, in passing by Purpurius, a certain Cecilian bishop brushed the edge of his phelonion against the raiment of the Donatist. The latter staggered back, and, lifting it up squeamishly with two fingers, so that all might see, shook in the air several times the cloth defiled by the touch of the heretic. Evander told Juventinus that whenever, by chance, a Cecilian enters a church of the Donatists, the latter drive him out and afterward painstakingly wash off with salt water the flags upon which he had stood.

At the heels of Purpurius, like a dog, trotted his faithful body-guard, a half-savage African of enormous stature, black, fearful, with a splayed nose, thick lips, and a rough club in his sinewy hands,—the Deacon Leona, belonging to a sect of self-torturers. These were inhabitants of Hætulian hamlets; they were styled Circumcelliones. Running about with weapons in their hands, they offered money to whomsoever they met on the highways, and threatened them: "Slay us, else we shall slay you!" The Circumcelliones cut and seared themselves; they threw themselves into water in the name of Christ; but never did they resort to hanging, inasmuch as Judas Iscariot had hanged himself. On occasion whole hordes of them, with chanting of psalms, would cast themselves headlong into chasms; they averred that self-murder, for the glory of God, purified the soul of all sins. The populace revered them as martyrs. Before death they gave themselves up to pleasures, —they feasted, they drank, they raped women. Many refrained from the use of the sword, inasmuch as Christ

had forbidden the use of the sword; but then, they would massacre heretics and pagans with enormous cudgels, "according to the Scripture," and with their consciences at ease; shedding blood, they cried out: "Praise be to the Lord!" This sacred cry the peaceful dwellers in the African cities and hamlets dreaded more than the trumpets of their enemies and the roaring of lions. The Donatists held the Circumcelliones to be their warriors and guards; and, since these villagers of Hætulia understood but ill the ecclesiastical disputes, the Donatist theologians indicated to them who, precisely, ought to be massacred, "according to the Scripture."

Evander drew the attention of Juventinus to a handsome youth, with a visage as innocent and tender as that of a young maiden,—he was a Cainite.

"Blessed," preached the Cainites, "are our proud brethren, who have not submitted: Cain, Ham, the dwellers of Sodom and Gomorrah,—the family of Highest Sophia, the Hidden Wisdom! Come to us, all ye that are persecuted, all ye that have risen up in revolt, all ye that have been vanquished! Blessed is Judas! He alone of the Apostles had been a communicant of the Higher Knowledge,—Gnosis. He did betray Christ,—in order that Christ die and rise up again, inasmuch as Judas knew that the death of Jesus would save the universe. He that is initiated into our wisdom must transgress all limits, must dare all, must contemn substance, having set his heel upon the very fear of it, and, having given himself up to all sins, all the delights of the flesh, must attain a beneficent revulsion for the flesh,—the ultimate spiritual purity."

"Look, Juventinus,—there is a man who deems himself immeasurably above the seraphim and archangels."

Evander indicated a graceful young Ægyptian, standing aloof from all, clad in the latest Byzantine mode, with a multiplicity of precious rings upon his well-cared-for white hands, with a crafty smile upon his thin lips, which were bepainted, like those of a harlot; this was Cassiodorus, a Valentinian.

"The orthodox Christians," affirmed Cassiodorus, "have a soul, even as other animals, but no spirit. We alone, initiated into the mysteries of the Pleroma and the Gnosis, are worthy of being styled human beings; all the others are but swine and dogs."

Cassiodorus instilled his disciples thusly:

"Ye must know all men; ye must be known of none. Before the uninitiated, deny the Gnosis, keep silence, contemn proofs, contemn profession of faith and martyrdom. Love speechlessness and mystery. Be unseizable and invisible to your enemies, even as incorporate powers without incorporeal forces. To ordinary Christians good works are necessary for their salvation. To those who have the Superior Knowledge of God,—Gnosis,—good works are unnecessary. We be the sons of light. They be the sons of darkness. We no longer dread sin, inasmuch as we know: to the flesh belongs the fleshly, to the spirit the spiritual. We be upon such a height that we cannot fall, no matter how we may sin,—our hearts remain pure in sin, even as gold amid mire."

A little old man, strabismic and of suspicious appearance, with the face of a lecherous faun,—the Adamite Prodicus,—was asserting that, evidently, his teaching bred anew in mortals the primordial innocency of Adam, —naked Adamites consummated mysteries in their churches, as stiflingly heated as baths, which churches they styled Aidens; like to our first parents before their

fall, they were not ashamed of their nakedness, asserting that all their men and women were distinguished for their chastity; nevertheless, the purity of these paradisaical gatherings was dubious.

On the floor, alongside of the Adamite Prodicus, was seated a pale, grey-haired woman, in episcopal raiment, with a splendidly beautiful, austere face, her eye-lids half-shut from fatigue,—the prophetess of the Montanists. The xanthochroous, wasted castrates reverently tended her, contemplating her with languorous, infatuated eyes, and styled her the Heavenly Dove. Wasting for long years from the raptures of unrealized love, they preached that humankind must be made to end through chaste abstinence. Upon parched plains of Phrygia, near the ruined city of Pepuza, did these bloodless dreamers squat, in whole hordes, their eyes immovably fixed upon the line of the horizon, whence the Saviour was to appear; on misty evenings, over the grey plain, between the clouds, in the stripes of molten gold, they beheld the glory of the Lord, the new Sion, descending upon the earth; years upon years went by, and they died with the hope that the Kingdom of God would descend,—would come, finally, upon the parched ruins of Pepuza.

At times, lifting up her wearied lids, fixing her turbid eyes upon the distance, the prophetess would mutter in Syriac:

"*Maran atha! Maran atha!*—The Lord cometh! The Lord cometh!"

And the pallid castrates bent toward her, paying heed.

Juventinus listened to the explanations of Evander, and reflected that all this resembled delirium; his heart contracted with bitter pity.

There fell a silence. All eyes were turned in one direc-

tion. At the other end of the atrium, Julian the Cæsar mounted a marble elevation. A simple white chlamys of the ancient philosophers enveloped him; his face was self-assured; he wanted to give it a dispassionate expression, but an involuntary spark of malicious gaiety would occasionally flare up in his eyes.

"Ancients and teachers!" he turned to the gathering. "We have deemed it good to evince to our subjects, who profess the teaching of the Galilean Crucified, all possible indulgence and kindness of heart,—one must bear more compassion than hatred toward the deluded; to bring the contumacious to the truth through admonitions, but by no means through blows, affronts, and bodily wounds. And, therefore, being desirous of establishing the peace of the whole universe, for so long violated by ecclesiastical dissensions, I have convoked ye, the Galilean sages. Under our patronage and protection ye will evince, we hope, an example of lofty virtues, such as are befitting to your spiritual rank, to your faith and wisdom. . . ."

He was delivering a speech prepared beforehand, with stately gestures, like an experienced rhetorician before a gathering of the people. But in his words, filled with benevolence, were concealed venomous fangs,—among other things, he pointed out that he had not yet forgotten about the ludicrous and debasing dissensions of the Galileans, which had occurred at the famous council of Milan, during the reign of Constantine; he also did not forget to mention, *in passim*, with an evil sneer, certain daring rebels, who, regretting that it was no longer permitted to persecute, torture, and put to death their brethren in the faith, were inciting the populace with silly tales, pouring oil upon the flame of enmity, and filling the universe with fratricidal fury,—these, truly, were the

foes of humankind, the ones guilty of the worst of calamities,—lawlessness. And the Cæsar concluded his speech suddenly with a sneer almost evident.

"Your brethren, exiled by the councils during the reigns of Constantine and Constantius, we have remanded from exile, being desirous of bestowing liberty upon all the citizens of the Roman Empire.—Dwell in peace, Galileans, according to the covenant of your Master. But for the sake of a full cessation of strifes, we entrust you, most wise of preceptors, forgetting all enmity and leaguing together in brotherly love, to arrive at some ecclesiastical agreement, in order that there may be established a profession of faith, single, and common to all. With that very end in view have we summoned ye hither, to our house, after the example of our predecessors, Constantine and Constantius; judge and decide by the authority vested in you from the Church. As for us, we shall withdraw, affording you full freedom, and awaiting your decision."

Before any one in the council had time to recover or to protest, Julian, surrounded by his friends the philosophers, walked out of the atrium. They were all speechless; some one heaved a profound sigh; in the silence could be heard only the joyous, silken swish of the pigeons' wings in the sky, and the plashing of the fountain against the marble. Suddenly, upon the raised plates of marble which had served the Cæsar as a tribune, there appeared that same kindly old man of provincial appearance and with the Armenian accent, at whom all of them had so recently been laughing; his face was red, his eyes ablaze. The speech of the Emperor had been an insult to the old Bishop of Sebaste. Flaming with spiritual zeal, Eustaphius stood forth before the council.

" Fathers and brethren!" he exclaimed, and there was such power in his voice that none any longer thought of laughing.

"Let us disperse in peace! He who has summoned us here for revilement and temptation is familiar neither with the canons of the Church, nor the œcumenical rules; he hateth the very name of Christ. Let us not, then, serve as cause for merriment to our enemies, let us refrain from the angry word. I adjure ye in the name of the All-Highest God,—let us disperse, brethren, in speechlessness!"

He spake in a loud voice, lifting his eyes up to the choir-stalls, protected from the sun by scarlet awnings,—there, in their recesses, between the columns, appeared the Emperor with his friends the philosophers. A whisper of amazement and horror was heard in the crowd. Julian was looking straight into the face of Eustaphius. The old man bore his gaze and was not abashed. The Emperor blanched. At the same instant the Donatist Purpurius rudely thrust aside the bishop and took his place on the tribune.

"Heed him not!" Purpurius set up a cry. "Disperse not, lest ye transgress the will of the Cæsar. The Cecilians wax angry for that he is our Deliverer. . . ."

"Nay, brethren," strove Eustaphius, beseechingly.

"No brethren of yours are we,—get away from us, ye accursed ones! We be the clean wheat of God,—ye are the dried chaff, destined by the Lord for the fire! . . ."

And, pointing to the Apostate Emperor, Purpurius went on in a solemn, canorous voice, as though proclaiming the Church's hymn of praise to him:

"Glory, glory to the beneficent, most wise Augustus! Upon the aspic and the basilisk shalt thou set thy foot,

and spurn the lion and the serpent. . . .[25] For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.[26] Glory!"

The council grew turbulent; some asserted that the advice of Eustaphius ought to be followed, and that they should disperse; others demanded the floor, not wishing to lose the last chance of their lives to voice their thoughts before any council whatsoever. Faces grew inflamed; voices were becoming deafening.

"Let any one of the Cecilian bishops look in at our churches," exulted Purpurius; "we shall lay our hands upon his head,—not to choose him as our pastor, however, but to split his skull!"

Many had entirely forgotten the purpose of the council, launching upon hair-splitting theological disputes; they enticed hearers to themselves; they battled to get hearers away from the others; they strove to seduce the inexperienced.

Triphon, a Basilician, who had gone out of Ægypt, was exhibiting, surrounded by a throng of the curious, an amulet of translucent chrysolite with the cabalistic inscription: *Abraxas.*

"He that comprehendeth the word *Abraxas,*" Triphon was holding forth the temptation, "shall receive the highest freedom, shall become immortal, and, tasting of all the delights of sin, shall be without sin. The letters of *Abraxas,* as numerals, express the number of empyreans, —three hundred and sixty and five. Over the three hundred and sixty and five spheres, over the hierarchies of the emanative æons, the angels and archangels, there is a certain Nameless Darkness, more splendid than any light,—immovable, sterile. . . ."

"That nameless darkness is in that poor-witted head

of thine!" cried out an Arian bishop, clenching his fists and advancing upon Triphon. The gnostic immediately fell silent, compressing his lips in a sneer of contempt, half-shutting his eyes and lifting up an index finger:

"Highest Wisdom! Highest Wisdom!" he uttered, barely audibly, and walked away, seeming to slip out of the very hands of the Arian.

The Prophetess of Pepuza, supported under the arms by enamoured castrates, raising herself to her full height,—awesome, pale, with dishevelled hair, her eyes turbid and half-mad,—began to ululate inspiredly, knowing naught, hearing naught:

"*Maran atha! Maran atha*—The Lord cometh! The Lord cometh!"

The disciples of the youth Epiphanius, who had about him something of a pagan demigod and something of a Christian martyr, and who was deified in the chapels of Caphallenia,—were proclaiming:

"Fraternity and equality! There be no other laws. Destroy,—destroy all things! Let all men hold in common their property and wives,—even as the grass, even as the water, even as the air and the sun are held!"

The Ophites, worshippers of serpents, were raising aloft a cross of copper, entwined by a small, trained Nilotic snake:

"The Wisdom of the Serpent," said they, "imparteth to men a knowledge of good and evil. Behold the Saviour,—the Ophiomorph, the Serpent-Like. Fear not,—heed him; he hath not lied; taste of the forbidden fruit,—and ye shall become even as the gods!"

With the nimble dexterity of an escamoteur, raising aloft a transparent bowl of glass, filled with water,

Marcosian, a perfumed and becurled dandy, a seducer of women, was inviting the curious:

"Look ye, look ye! A miracle! The water shall come to a boil and turn into blood."

The Kolorbasians were rapidly telling off on their fingers and proving that all the Pythagorean numbers, all the mysteries of heaven and earth, were contained in the letters of the Greek alphabet:

"Alpha, Omega,—the beginning and the end. And, between them, is the Trinity,—beta, gamma, delta: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. D'ye see, how simple?"

Fabionites, gluttonous Carpocratians, Bartolonites,—the Depraved Ones,—preached such abominations that pious folk did but spit to vent their disgust and stuck their fingers in their ears. Many acted upon their auditors with that incomprehensible, attractive force which the monstrous and the mad exercise over the minds of men. Every one was convinced of his being in the right. And all were against all.

Even an insignificant little church, lost in one of the most distant deserts of Africa,—the Rogatians; and even they asserted that Christ, 'twould seem, were He to come down upon earth, would find a true understanding of the Evangel only with them, in certain hamlets of Cæsarean Mauretania,—and nowhere else in the universe.

Evander of Nicomedia, having forgotten all about Juventinus, could barely manage to inscribe on his waxed tablets the new heresies which he had not yet taken notice of, becoming engrossed, like a collector of rarities.

But in the meanwhile, from the marble gallery above, his eyes filled with an avid and sated hatred, the young Emperor, surrounded by his sages in their white garments

of antiquity, was gazing down upon these men in their raging madness. Here were all of his friends: Proclus the Pythagorean; Nymphidius; Eugenius Priscus; Ædesius; the most aged master, Iamblicus the Divine; the benign-visaged Hekebolius, the archiereus of Dindymene; they laughed not, nor jested, and preserved a perfect calm, as befits sages; only at rare intervals there would appear upon their austerely compressed lips a smile of quiet pity. This was a banquet of Hellenic wisdom. They gazed down upon the council, even as gods gaze down upon mortals warring with one another, or as lovers of the circus look down upon an arena, where beasts devour one another. In the purple shadow of the awnings they felt cool and comfortable. But below them the Galileans, dripping with sweat, anathematized and preached.

In the midst of the confusion, a youthful, muliebrile Cainite, with a splendidly beautiful, tender face, with pensive eyes of a child-like radiance, had contrived to jump up on a tribune and cried out in such an inspired voice that all turned around and were stricken mute:

"Blessed are they that have not submitted to God! Blessed are Cain, Ham, Judas, the dwellers of Sodom and Gomorrah! Blessed is their Father, the Angel of the Abyss and of Darkness!"

The raging African, Purpurius, who had not been given a chance to say a word for all of an hour, desiring to ease his heart, threw himself upon the Cainite and raised up a hirsute sinewy arm, in order to "bar the lips of the impious one." They held him back, trying to make him come to his senses:

"Father, 'tis unseemly!"

"Let me go! Let me go!" shouted Purpurius, tearing

himself loose from the hands which held him. "I shall not suffer this abomination! There, take that, thou offspring of Cain!" And the Donatist spat in the face of the Cainite.

Everything became confusion. A fracas would have sprung up, had not the spear-bearers come on the run. Parting the Christians, the warriors were admonishing them:

"Quieter! Quieter! 'Tis out of place in the palace. Or are there not enough churches for ye to fight in?"

Purpurius was lifted up in their arms, their aim being to drag him off. He vociferated:

"Leona! Deacon Leona!"

His body-guard jostled the warriors apart, felled two to the ground, freed Purpurius,—and, through the air, above the heads of the heresiarchs, the fearful cudgel of the Circumcellion began to whirl and swish whistlingly.

"Praise be to the Lord!" vociferated the African, choosing a victim with his eyes. Suddenly, in his weakened hands, the cudgel sank down helplessly. All were turned to stone. Through the silence rang out the piercing cry of one of the half-witted castrates of the Prophetess of Pepuza. He fell down on his knees, and, with a face distorted by terror, was pointing to the tribune:

"The Devil! The Devil! The Devil!"

Upon the marble elevation, over the throng of the Galileans, with his hands crossed on his breast, calmly and majestically, in the white garb of a philosopher, stood the Emperor Julian; his eyes blazed with an ominous gaiety. To many, at that minute, he seemed to resemble the Devil.

"So,—thus do ye carry out the law of love, Galileans!" he uttered amidst the horror-struck conclave. "I see now what your love means. Truly, feral beasts are more merciful than ye, ye philadelphians! I may well say in the words of your Master: 'Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.[27] . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' " [28]

Having taken his sweet fill of their agonized silence, he added, slowly and solemnly:

"If ye can not govern yourselves,—then I say unto ye, guarding ye from worse evils: Obey me, Galileans, and submit!"

VII

As Julian, setting out to offer a sacrifice at the little temple of the Goddess of Luck, Tyche, which adjoined the palace, was descending from the Atrium of Constantine, down the steps of the broad staircase, there walked up to him the grey-haired, bowed Bishop of Chalcedon, Máris. The eyes of Máris had flowed out from age; a boy leader led the blind man by his hand.

The staircase led to the Plaza Augusteion; a crowd had gathered below. With an imperious gesture of his hand having halted the Emperor, the Bishop began speaking in a senile voice, firm and clear:

"Pay heed, ye nations, tribes, tongues, men of all ages,—all, that be here now, or shall ever be upon earth! Heed me, ye Higher Powers, angels by whom shall soon be consummated the extirpation of the Torturer! 'Tis not the King of the Amorites that shall be laid low, nor Og, the King of Bashan, but the Serpent, the Apostate, the Great Intellect, the rebellious Assyrian, the common enemy and antagonist, who had wrought many unseemlinesses upon earth, and who directed his speech upward. Hearken, ye heavens, and inform the earth! And do thou heed my prophecy, Cæsar, inasmuch as God Himself doth speak now through my lips. The word of the Lord consumeth my heart as with fire,—and I can not keep silent.—Thy days are numbered. 'Tis but a little while more,—and thou shalt perish, shalt vanish, even as dust that is raised up by the whirlwind, even as the

dew, even as the whizzing of an arrow released, even as a peal of thunder, even as the quick-flying lightning. The Castalian Spring shall be stilled forever,—men shall pass by and shall mock at it. Apollo shall once more become a speechless idol, Daphnis—a tree bewailed in a fable; and the overthrown temples shall become overgrown with grave-grass. O, abomination of Sennacherib! Thus do we prophesy,—we Galileans, men contemned, who bow down before the Crucified; disciples of the fishermen of Capernaum, and ourselves men of ignorance; we, who be emaciated by fasts; we the half dead, keeping awake in vain and uttering empty words during all-night vigils,—and yet, nevertheless, laying ye low,—thus do we prophesy: 'Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world?' [29] I borrow this hymn of victory from one of our simple ones. Let us have thy kingly and sophistical speeches, thy irrefutable syllogisms and enthymemes! We shall e'en see how our unlearned fishers speak. Yea, may David burst forth into daring song, who with the mystic stones did lay low the haughty Goliath; who did subdue many with his humility, and with his sweet spiritual harmony did make whole Saul, the tormented of an evil spirit. We thank thee, Lord! Now thy Church is being purged by persecution. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! Light the lamps, ye wise virgins! Clothe the priest in a great and undefiled chiton,—in Christ, our bridal raiment!"

The last words he delivered chantingly, like the words of divine service. The soul-shaken crowd replied to him with a rumble of approval. Some one exclaimed:

"Amen!"

The Emperor heard the long speech out to the end with imperturbable *sang-froid*, as though it was not at

all with him that the matter dealt,—save that, at the corners of his lips, there would occasionally appear a smile of mockery.

"Hast ended, old man?" he asked calmly.

"Here are my hands, ye torturers! Tie them! Lead me to my death! Lord, I receive thy crown!"

The bishop raised up his dim eyes towards heaven.

"Dost think, good man, that I shall lead thee to death?" asked Julian. "Thou errest. I shall let thee go in peace. There is no malice within my soul against thee."

"What is it? What is it? What is he speaking of?" men were asking in the crowd.

"Tempt me not! I shall not apostatize from Christ! Get thee from me, thou foe of mankind!—Headsmen, lead me to my death. Here I am!"

"There be no headsmen here, my friend. Here be all good people, even such as thou. Calm thyself! Life is more dreary and ordinary than thou dost think it. I listened to thee with curiosity, as an admirer of every sort of eloquence, even the Galilean. And what only was there not in it!—The abomination of Sennacherib, and the King of the Amorites, and the stones of David, and Goliath! There is no simplicity in your speeches. Do read a bit of our Demosthenes, Plato,—and, especially, Homer. They are, really, as simple as children, as wise as gods. Aye, learn from them great calmfulness, ye Galileans! God is not in tempests, but in the silences. And that is all my preachment, that is all my vengeance, —since thou thyself didst demand vengeance."

"May the Lord strike thee down, thou Blasphemer! . . ." Máris was about to launch forth again.

"The Lord shall not make me blind in His wrath, nor thee seeing," retorted the Augustus.

"I thank God for my blindness," exclaimed the old man. "He doth not allow my eyes to behold the accursed face of the Apostate!"

"What great malice, what malice,—in such a decrepit body! Ye are for aye speaking of resignation, of love, Galileans,—but what hatred there is in every word ye utter!—I am but come out of a council, wherein brethren, in the name of God, were ready to rend one another asunder, like beasts; and here art thou, now, with thy uncurbed speech. Wherefore such hatred? Am I, too, not a brother of yours? Oh, didst thou but know how untroubled and benevolent my heart is at this moment! I wish thee every good, and pray the Olympians that they may soften thy cruel, dark and suffering soul, blind one. Go thy ways in peace, and remember that it is not the Galileans alone who know how forgive."

"Believe him not, brethren! This is guile, the enticement of the Serpent! Thou hast seen, Lord, how the Apostate doth mockingly revile thee, the God of Israel,—let it not, then, pass in silence!"

Paying no further attention to the curses of the old man, Julian passed through the midst of the people in his simple white raiment, illumined by the sun, calm and wise, like one of the heroes of antiquity.

VIII

The night was tempestuous. At rare intervals the glimmer of the moon penetrated through the fast scurrying clouds and blended strangely with the gleaming of the lightning. A warm wind, saturated with the salty odour of rotting kelp, lashed one with the needles of an oblique rain.

A horseman rode up to a lonely ruin on the shore of the Bosphorus. In times immemorial, when the Trojans had dwelt here, this fortification had served as a sentry tower; now there were left of it only mounds of stones, grown over with tall grass, and half-ruined walls. Below it was a little hut, a haven from inclemency for shepherds and vagabonds who had lost their way. Having tethered his steed under the shelter of a half-collapsed arch and parted the prickly burdock, the horseman knocked at the low door:

"'Tis I, Mèroë. Open!"

An Ægyptian woman opened the door and admitted him into the interior of the tower. The horseman approached a dimly burning torch. The light fell on his face. It was the Emperor Julian.

They went out. The old woman, who knew this place well, led him by the hand. Thrusting aside the coarse stalks of dead thistles, she sought out the low entrance in a crevice between the crags. They went down some steps. The sea was near; the surging of the incoming tide

made the earth quake; but the walls of stone were a protection from the wind. The Ægyptian woman struck a light with a flint.

"Here, my master, is the lamp and the key. Turn it twice in the lock. If thou meetest the gate-keeper, have no fear. I bribed him off. Only look thou make no mistake,—in the upper passage, the thirteenth cell to the left."

Julian unlocked the door, and for a long while walked down a steep incline with broad steps of ancient flagstones. Soon the subterrane changed into such a narrow cleft that two men meeting would not have been able to pass each other. This secret passage joined the one-time sentry tower of the fortification on the opposite shore of the bay—which tower was now an abandoned ruin—with a new Christian nunnery.

Julian emerged out of the subterrane high above the seething sea, between sharp-pointed crags, gnawed by the surf, and began clambering up the narrow steps hewn in the cliff. Having reached to the very top, he beheld a brick enclosure. It had been laid unevenly,—many of the bricks were projecting. Supporting one's feet on these, clutching with the hands, it was possible to climb over into the diminutive nunnery garden.

He entered a tidy court. Here everything breathed of calm. The walls were grown over with tea-roses. In the stormy, warm air the flowers gave forth a strong and perturbing fragrance. The shutters in one of the lower windows were not locked on the inside. Julian most softly opened them and climbed in at the window. Upon his face was breathed the stuffy air of the nunnery. There was a smell of dankness, incense, mice, medicinal herbs and fresh apples, which the thrifty nuns preserved

in their larders. The Emperor set foot in a long passage; on either side there was a succession of doors. He counted the thirteenth one on the left and opened it with exceeding softness. The cell was dimly lit with an alabaster night lamp. There was wafted upon him a somnolent warmth. He held his breath.

Upon a low couch, with covers as white as snow, lay a young girl, in the dark tunic of a nun. She had most probably fallen asleep during her prayers, without having managed to disrobe; the shadow of her lashes fell upon her pale cheeks; her eyebrows were contracted, austerely and majestically, like those of the dead. He recognised Arsinoë.

She had changed very much. Only her hair remained the same,—darkly aureate at its roots, pale-yellow, like honey in a ray of the sun, at its tips.

Her lashes quivered. She sighed.

Before his eyes there flashed the proud body of the Amazon, flooded with sunlight, blinding, like the aureate marble of the Parthenon. And, stretching forth his arms towards the nun, sleeping under the shadow of a black cross, Julian uttered in a whisper:

"Arsinoë!"

The girl opened her eyes,—she glanced at him calmly, without amazement or fear, as though she had known he would come. But, recovering, she shuddered and passed her hand over her face.

He walked up to her:

"Fear not. Tell me but the word,—I shall go."

"Wherefore hast thou come?"

"I was fain to know if it were true. . . ."

"Julian, it matters not. . . . We shall never comprehend one another."

"Is it true that thou dost believe in Him, Arsinoë?"

She made no reply.

"Dost thou remember that night in Athens?" continued the Emperor. "Dost thou remember how thou didst tempt me, a Galilean monk, even as I am tempting thee now? The former pride and power are in thy face, Arsinoë, and not the slavish resignation of the Galileans! Wherefore dost thou lie, then? 'Tis not thus the heart changeth. Tell me the truth."

"I desire power," she uttered quietly.

"Power? Thou still rememberest our alliance!" he exclaimed joyously.

She shook her head with a sad smile.

"O nay! . . . Power over men is not worth the while. Thou knowest this thyself. I desire power over myself."

"And 'tis for that thou seekest the desert?"

"Aye. And for freedom as well."

"Arsinoë, thou lovest thyself as of yore,—only thyself!"

"I were fain to love myself and others, as He hath commanded. But I can not,—I hate myself and the others."

"'Twere better not to live at all!" exclaimed Julian.

"One must overcome one's self," she spoke slowly, "one must conquer in one's self not only the repugnance towards death, but, as well, the repugnance towards life,—this is considerably harder, inasmuch as life is more dreadful than death. But then, if one attains an ultimate conquest of self, life and death will be alike,—and then there is freedom!"

Her thin eyebrows were contracting with the obsti-

nacy of an insuperable will. Julian was gazing upon her with despair.

"What have they done with thee!" he spake softly. "All of you are either torturers or tortured. Why do ye torment yourselves? Canst thou not see, then, that in thy soul there is naught save malice and despair? . . ."

She glanced up at him with hatred:

"Wherefore hast thou come hither? I did not call thee. Go! What concern is it of mine what thou mayst think? Sufficient unto me are my own thoughts and torments! . . . There is between us an abyss, which the living may not bridge. Thou sayest I do not believe. Aye, I do not believe, but I do desire to believe,—dost thou hear? I desire to, and I shall. I shall chastise and rend my flesh to the end, shall emaciate it with hunger and with thirst, shall make it more insensate than the dead stones. But, chiefest of all,—the intellect! One must put it to death, for that it is a devil. It is more tempting than all desires. I shall tame it. This shall be the ultimate victory, —the greatest! And then comes freedom. Then we shall see, whether aught within me shall wax indignant, whether aught shall say: 'I believe not.' "

She clasped the palms of her hands and extended them towards heaven, in hopeless supplication:

"Lord, have mercy upon me! Where art thou, Lord,— hearken unto me and have mercy upon me!"

Julian threw himself on his knees before her, entwined her waist with his arms, drew her to his breast by force, and his eyes flashed with victory:

"Oh, maiden, now I can see that thou couldst not have gone away from us,—thou didst want to and couldst not. Come at once, come with me,—and on the morrow thou shalt be the spouse of the Roman Emperor,

thyself the sovereign mistress of the world. I walked in here as a thief; I shall walk forth as a king, with my prize. What a victory over the Galileans!"

The face of Arsinoë became sad and calm. She looked at Julian with pity, without repulsing him. "Poor fellow, poor fellow,—even as poor as I! Thou thyself knowest not whither thou dost call me. And whom dost thou put thy trust in? Thy gods be corpses. From this contamination, from this fearful odour of the corruption, do I flee into the desert. Leave me. I can help thee in naught. Go!"

His eyes blazed up with wrath and passion. But she pronounced, still more calmly, with greater pity, so that his heart shuddered within him and grew chill, as from a mortal affront:

"And wherefore dost thou deceive thyself? Art thou not the same unbeliever, the same perishing one, as any of us? Reflect,—what is the significance of thy compassion, thy hostels, thy sermons of the Hellenic priests? All this is but a mimicking of the Galileans,—all this is new, unknown to the men of antiquity, the heroes of Hellas. Julian, Julian,—why, are thy gods the Olympians of yore, the radiant ones, the merciless ones,—the awesome children of celestial azure, waxing merry at the blood and sacrifices and the sufferings of mortals? The blood and the sufferings of men are the nectar and ambrosia of the gods. Whereas these gods of thine have been seduced by the faith of the fishermen of Capernaum,—weak, meek, ailing, dying from their pity toward men,—inasmuch as, dost thou see, pity toward men is deathly for the gods! . . ."

The storm had died down. Through the window one could see, between the rent clouds, the bottomlessly deep

sky shining with a melancholy green glow, in which was dying the star of Aphrodite. The Emperor felt deep fatigue. His face became covered with a deathly pallor. He was making fearful efforts to appear calm, but every word of Arsinoë penetrated to the very depth of his heart, and wounded.

"Aye," she continued, inexorably, "ye are ailing, ye are too weak for your own wisdom. Therein is your curse, ye belated Hellenes! There is no strength in ye, neither in good nor in evil. Ye are nor day nor night,—nor life nor death. Your heart is both here and there; ye have cast off from one shore, but have not beached on the other. Ye believe and do not believe, constantly changing, constantly wavering; ye would and ye can not, inasmuch as ye know not how to desire. Only they be strong that, seeing one truth, are blind to any other. Such shall vanquish ye,—ye double-minded ones, wise and weak. . . ."

Julian raised up his head with an effort, as though overcoming an unbelievable weight, and uttered:

"Thou art wrong, Arsinoë. My soul knoweth not fear, my will is inexorable. The forces of destiny are leading me. If it be fated for me to die before my time, I know that my death shall be splendidly beautiful before the face of the gods. Farewell. See,—I depart without wrath, sad and calm, inasmuch as now thou art for me as one dead."

IX

Over the gates of the main building of the hospital of Apollo the Far-Darting, for beggars, pilgrims, and cripples, upon the marble front of the portal was cut out an inscription in Greek,—a stanza from Homer:

> We are all come from Zeus,—
> Wayfarers poor. Little I give, but that little with loving.

Julian set foot within the interior of the portico; a row of graceful Ionic pillars surrounded the court,—the edifice had at one time been a palæstra. The evening was calm, of a tranquil joyousness. But from the porticoes of the hospital, from its inner chambers, there was wafted an oppressive stench. Here, all of a heap, sprawled children and old men, Christians and pagans, the ill and the hale, cripples, monsters, the palsied, the halt, those covered with suppurating scabs, those bloated with dropsy, those emaciated from tabes,—beings with the impress of all vices and all sufferings upon their faces.

A half-naked hag, in tatters, her skin of a dark colour, like to the colour of sere leaves, was scratching her back, covered with sores, against the delicate marble of an Ionic column.

In the middle of the court reared up a sculpture of the Pythian Apollo, with a bow in his hands and a quiver at his back. At the very base of the eidolon sat a wrinkled monster, neither a child nor an old man; embracing his knees with his hands, with his chin laid upon them,

he was slowly rocking from side to side and with a dull-witted expression of countenance was chanting in a low voice a piteous little song:

"Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us, the accursed ones!"

The chief director of the hospital, Marcus Ausonius, appeared, pale and trembling.

"Most Wise and Most Gracious Cæsar, will it please thee to enter my house?—Here the air is bad. And there is contagion,—the ward of the lepers is not far off."

"Art thou the chief director?"

Ausonius, trying not to breathe, in order to avoid infection, made a low obeisance.

"Are bread and wine distributed daily?"

"Everything,—as the Most Blessed Augustus hath ordained."

"What filth!"

" 'Tis the Galileans. They deem it a sin to wash,—no amount of force can drive them into the bath. . . ."

"Order the accompt books to be brought," uttered Julian.

The director fell on his knees and babbled:

"Sire, everything is in order, but there has happed a misfortune,—the books were in a fire. . . ."

The Emperor frowned.

At this moment shouts were heard in the throng of the sick:

"A miracle, a miracle! A paralytic is getting on his feet!"

Julian turned around and beheld a man of tall stature,—his face grown insane from joy, his hands stretched forth toward the Emperor, with a child-like

faith in his eyes, he was rising up from his bedding of rotting straw.

"I believe, I believe!" uttered the paralytic. "Thou art a god, descended upon earth! Behold thy face, like to the face of a god! Touch me, make me whole, Cæsar!"

"A miracle, a miracle!" exulted the sick. "Glory to the Emperor,—glory to Apollo the Healer."

"And me, and me!" called the others. "Utter the word,—and I shall be made whole!"

The sinking sun penetrated through the open gates and with a tender glow illumined the marble countenance of Far-Darting Apollo. The Emperor glanced at it, and suddenly all that was transpiring in the hospital struck him as a sacrilege,—the orbs of the god must not behold such hideousness.—And Julian felt a desire arise within him to cleanse the ancient palæstra, where once the Hellenes had striven in free games, from all this Galilean and pagan riff-raff, from all this mephitic human corruption. Oh, if but the ancient god were to arise again,—how his orbs would flash, how his arrows would fly, twanging, smiting down these cripples and tabetics, purifying the stifling air!

Hurriedly and silently he walked out of the Hospital of Apollo, having forgotten about the accompt books of Ausonius. He surmised that the information lodged was correct, that the chief inspector was a taker of bribes; but such fatigue and repugnance took possession of his heart that he had not enough spirit to investigate the fraud and to check up.

When he returned to the palace it was late. He ordered no one to be received and withdrew to his favourite spot,—a high little terrace between columns, over the Bay of Bosphorus.

The whole day had been passed in dreary, petty matters, in bureaucratic squabbles, in checking up accounts. A multiplicity of bribes was being exposed. The Emperor saw that his best friends were duping him. All these Hellenic savants, poets, rhetoricians, to whom he had entrusted the direction of the universe, were no more moderate in looting the treasury than the Christian eunuchs and bishops in the time of Constantius had been. Hostels, homes for philosophers, on the manner of monasteries, the hospitals of Apollo and Aphrodite,—all were but a pretence for the accumulation of riches by adroit folk; all the more so since not only to the Galileans, but to the pagans as well, they seemed a ludicrous and sacrilegious whim of the Cæsar.

He felt his whole body ache dully from a heavy, fruitless fatigue. Extinguishing the lamp, he lay down on his camp-couch.

"I must think things over in quietness, in tranquillity," he was saying to himself, contemplating the evening sky. But he felt no desire to think. An enormous star shone in the darkening, bottomlessly deep æther. Julian narrowed his lids, and through his lashes there glimmered its ray, penetrating to his heart, like a chill caress.

He came to with a start, having sensed that some one had entered the room. The light of the moon fell between the columns. A tall old man, with a beard as white as the plumage of a bald kite, with deep, dark wrinkles, which expressed not suffering, but an effort of will and thought, was standing over his couch. Julian raised himself up and uttered in a whisper:

"Master! Is it thou? . . ."

"Aye, Julian,—I have come to talk with thee privily."

"I listen."

"My son, thou shalt perish, for that thou hast betrayed thyself."

"Thou, too, Maximus,—thou, too, art against me! . . ."

"Remember, Julian,—the fruits of the golden Hesperides are ever green and hard. Mercy is the mellowness and sweetness of overripe, rotting fruits. Thou art a keeper of fasts, thou art chaste, thou art sorrowing, thou art merciful, thou dost style thyself the foe of the Christians,—but thou thyself art a Christian. Tell me,—wherewith wouldst thou conquer the Crucified?"

"With the strength of the gods,—with beauty and joyousness."

"Hast thou strength?"

"I have."

"Such as to enable thee to bear the full truth?"

"Aye."

"Then know,—*they* do not exist."

Julian with horror looked into the calm, sage eyes of the master.

"Of whom dost thou say 'They do not exist'?" he asked, paling, in a voice that quavered.

"I tell thee: the gods do not exist. Thou standest alone."

The disciple of Maximus made no answer, and let his head drop on his breast. A profound tenderness lit up warmly in the eyes of the master. He laid a hand on Julian's shoulder:

"Be consoled. Or hast thou not comprehended? I was fain to put thee to the test. The gods exist. Seest thou, how weak thou art? Thou canst not stand alone. The gods exist,—they love thee. But remember,—'tis not

thou that shall make as one the truth of the Titan Chained with the truth of the Galilean Crucified. Dost want me to?—I shall tell thee what He will be like,—He who has not yet come, the Unknown, the Reconciler of the two universes?"

Julian kept silent, still frightened and pale.

"Behold, He will appear," continued Maximus, "even as the lightning out of the cloud, death-bearing and all-illuminating. He shall be fearful and fearless. In him shall blend good and evil, meekness and pride, even as light and shade blend in the murk of morning. And men shall bless him not only for his compassion, but for his mercilessness,—for even His mercilessness shall be endowed with a force and a beauty like that of the gods."

"Master!" exclaimed Julian. "Behold, I see all this in thine eyes. Say that thou art the Unknown, and I shall bless thee and follow in thy steps! . . ."

"Nay, my son. I am the light of His light, the spirit of His spirit. But, as yet, I am not He. I am the hope, I am the precursor."

"Wherefore, then, dost thou keep thyself hid from the sight of men? Appear to them, that they may come to know thee. . . ."

"My time has not yet come," answered Maximus. "More than once already have I come into this world, and I shall come again, more than once. Men fear me, styling me now a great sage, now a tempter, now a wizard,—Orpheus, Pythagoras, Maximus of Ephesus. But I am the Nameless One. I pass by the throng with lips mute, with face covered. For what can I say to the throng? They would not comprehend even my first word. The mystery of my love and my freedom are to them

more fearful than death. They are so distant from me that they e'en crucify me not, nor stone me to death, as they do their prophets, but simply recognise me not. I dwell in the sepulchres and converse with the dead; I withdraw upon the mountain heights and converse with the stars; I withdraw into the deserts, and hearken to the grass growing, to the moan of the sea-waves, to the beating of the earth's heart,—am ever on the alert, to see if the time be yet come. But the time has not yet come,—and again I withdraw, like a shade, with mute lips and covered face."

"Go not away, master,—forsake me not!"

"Fear not, Julian,—I shall not forsake thee to the end. I love thee, my beloved son, for that thou must perish because of me, nor is there salvation for thee.—Before I come into the world and reveal myself unto men, there shall yet perish many more, of the great, of the rejected, of those who have rebelled against God, with a deep and double-minded heart, tempted by my wisdom,—Apostates like unto thee. Men shall curse thee, but never forget, inasmuch as my seal is upon thee,—thou art my creation, the child of my wisdom. Men of the later, coming ages shall recognise me in thee; in thy despair,—my hopes, and through thy disgrace my grandeur,—like the sun through a fog."

"O Divine One!" exclaimed Julian. "If thy words be falsehood, let me e'en die for this falsehood, inasmuch as it is more splendidly beautiful than the truth!"

"At one time I did bless thee,—thy life and thy reign,—Emperor Julian; now I bless thee,—thy death and thy deathlessness. Go, perish for the Unknown, for the Coming One, for the Antichrist!"

With a smile solemn and soft, like a father blessing

his son, the old man laid his hands upon the head of Julian, kissed him on the brow, and spake:

"Behold, I again disappear into the subterranean murk, and none shall recognise me.—May my spirit be upon thee!"

X

In Greater Antioch, the capital of Syria, in a lane not far from the main street of Syngón, were situated the Thermæ,—the hot baths. The baths were fashionable, expensive. Many came here to hear the latest news of the town. Between the disrobing room and the cooling room, a luxurious hall, paved with vari-coloured marbles and mosaics, was set aside for sweating.[80] From the adjacent halls could be heard the plashing and laughter of the bathers, and the ceaseless murmuring of rills falling into the resonant bathing pools. Swarthy slaves and naked bath attendants were running about, bustling, opening vessels with aromatic substances. In Antioch the bath was the chief joy of life,—a high and complex art; not in vain was the capital of Syria celebrated for the plenitude, taste and purity of its water, so limpid that the filled bath or bucket seemed to be empty.

Through the milky-white vapours, rising up from the marble air-vent in the sweating-hall one could see red, naked bodies. Some were half-recumbent, others were sitting erect; the bath attendants were rubbing certain ones with oil. They all conversed and sweated, preserving a solemn mien. The beauty of the many ancient sculptures, portraying Antinoüs and Adonis, disposed in depressions in the walls, intensified the latter-day ugliness of the living human bodies.

Out of the hot bath walked an obese old man, of majestic and hideous appearance,—the merchant Busirís,

who held in his hands the entire trade of the Antiochian grain mart. A graceful young man was respectfully supporting him by the arm. Although they were both naked, one could see at once who was the master and who the client.

"Turn on the heat!" uttered Busirís in a commanding, hoarse voice,—by the very thickness of its sound one could conclude what millions the grain-dealer manipulated.

Two copper faucets were opened,—the hot steam, hissing, burst out of the vent and surrounded the old man with a white cloud. Like some monstrous god in an apotheosis, he stood in the midst of this cloud, snorting, grunting from enjoyment, and slapping with his fat palms his red, fleshy belly, which tunded like a drum.

The quondam director of the hostels and hospitals of Apollo, the official of the quæstura, Marcus Ausonius, was squatting on his heels; diminutive, puny and thin, beside the fat massiveness of the merchant he seemed a plucked and frozen chick.

Junius Mauricus, the scoffer, could not, by any means, induce a sweat upon his stringy, bony body, as thin as a rail, and saturated through and through with spleen.

Gargilian was lying stretched out on the mosaic floor, —white-fleshed, flabby, soft as jelly, enormous as the carcass of a boar; a Paphlagonian slave, breathless from the strain, was rubbing his chubby back with a wet cloth.

Publius Porphyrius Optatian, the versifier grown rich, was with a sad pensiveness contemplating his legs, made hideous by podagra.

"Are ye familiar, my friends, with the epistle of the white bulls to the Roman Emperor?" asked the poet.

"We are not. Speak on. . . ."

" 'Tis but one line, all in all: 'If thou dost gain victory over the Persians, we are lost.' "

"And that is all?"

"What more would ye want?"

The white carcass of Gargilian began to shake with laughter:

"I swear by Pallas,—short but to the point! If he doth but return a victor from Persia, he shall then offer to the gods in sacrifice such a multitude of white bulls that these beasts shall become a greater rarity than the Ægyptian Apis. . . . Slave,—the small of my back! Harder!"

And the carcass, slowly turning over on its other side, smacked down with the sound of a heap of wet linen being thrown on the floor.

"He-he-he!" Junius burst into exceedingly high-pitched, jaundiced laughter. "Out of India, from the Isle of Taprobane, there has been brought,—so they say,—an incomputable multitude of white, rare birds; and, from somewhere in icy Scythia,—enormous wild swans. All for the gods. He doth fatten the Olympians. They have grown thin, the poor little fellows, since the times of Constantius!"

"The gods gormandise, the while we fast. 'Tis already three days that there has not been on the marts a single Colchidian pheasant, nor a single passable fish!" exclaimed Gargilian.

"Milksop!" remarked the grain-dealer curtly.

All turned around, lapsing into a respectful silence.

"Milksop!" repeated Busiris in a voice still more pompous and hoarse. "If but your Roman Cæsar, I say, were to have his little lips or his little nose tweaked, milk

would flow out of them, even as from a two-weeks-old infant, suckling at the breast. He was fain to beat down the price on grain, forbade selling it at the price he himself had set, imported four hundred thousand measures of Ægyptian wheat . . ."

"And what was the upshot? Did he beat it down?"

"Well, do but listen. I persuaded the merchants; they locked up their granaries; better, think we, to let the wheat rot, but still not submit. The Ægyptian grain was eaten up,—we don't let ours go. Thou hast cooked the porridge thyself,—and thyself shalt taste of it!"

Busiris triumphantly slapped his belly with his palms.

"Enough steam! Pour!" commanded the merchant, and a young handsome slave, with long curls, who resembled Antinoüs, uncorked over the magnate's head a slender amphora with precious Arabian cassia. The aromatic stuff coursed down in copious streams over the red, sweating body, and Busiris rubbed in the thick drops with enjoyment. Then, having anointed himself, he, with solemnity, wiped his thick fingers, as with a towel, against the aureate curls of the slave, who bent down his head.

"The remark Thy Grace wast pleased to make is absolutely correct," put in, with a bow, the amiable toad-eating client, "the Emperor Julian is naught else save a milksop. Recently he had issued a pasquinade against the inhabitants of Antioch under the title of *The Beard-Hater*,[81] wherein he replies to the abuse of the rabble with abuse still more brazen, declaring outright: 'Ye laugh at my uncouthness, at my beard? Laugh as much as ye will! I, myself, would laugh at my own self. For I would not have judgment, nor lodgings of information,

nor gaols, nor executions.' But, the question is,—is this worthy of a Roman Cæsar?"

"The Emperor Constantius, of blessed memory," didactically remarked Busiris, "was not to be compared with Julian,—at once, by his dress, by his bearing, one could see the Cæsar. But this fellow,—the Lord forgive us!—this abortion of the gods, this short-legged ape, this polt-footed bear, traipses around the streets unwashed, unshaven, unkempt, with ink-stains on his fingers. 'Tis nauseating to look at him! Books, learning, philosophy! —Bide a while,—we shall yet teach thee a lesson for thy free-thinking! Things like that are not to be jested with. One must hold the populace just *so!* If one but lets them have a free rein, there is no getting them in hand again."

Marcus Ausonius, who had been silent up to now, uttered meditatively:

"Everything could be forgiven,—but why deprive us of the last joy of life,—the circus, the combats of the gladiators? My friends, the sight of blood bestows bliss upon mortals. 'Tis a sacred joy. Without blood there is no gaiety, there's no grandeur upon earth. The smell of blood is the smell of Rome. . . ."

Upon the visage of the last scion of the Ausonii flared up a weak, strange emotion. He interrogatively let his glance roam over his auditors,—his simple-hearted eyes had in them of the senile, and, at the same time, something of the infantile.

The enormous carcass of Gargilian began to stir upon the floor; lifting up his head, he fixed his eyes upon Ausonius:

"Why, that was well put: the smell of blood is the smell of Rome! Keep on, keep on, Marcus,—thou art in the mood to-day."

"I say that which I feel, my friends. Blood is so delectable unto men, that e'en the Christians could not do without it,—they mean to purify the world through blood. Julian is making a mistake: depriving the populace of the circus, he deprives them of the gaiety of blood. The rabble would have forgiven all,—but this it will not forgive. . . ."

The last words Marcus pronounced in an inspired voice. Suddenly he passed his hand over his body, and his face beamed.

"Art sweating?" asked Gargilian with profound solicitude.

" 'Twould seem so," responded Ausonius, with a quiet, exalted smile. "Rub, rub the back, quickly,—ere I cool; rub!"

He lay down. A bath attendant fell to massaging his pitiful, bloodless members, tinged with a blueish pallor, like those of a cadaver.

Out of their porphyry niches, through the milky cloud of steam, the ancient Hellenic sculptures gazed upon the hideous bodies of these latter-day men.

And, in the meanwhile, in the lane near the entrance to the Thermæ, a crowd was gathering.

At night Antioch was a-glitter with lights; especially its main street, on the Syngón,—regular, traversing the city for a distance of thirty-six stadia, with porticoes and double colonnades down its entire length, and with its luxurious shops. Before the staircase of the baths, lighting up the motley crowd, flamed the streets light, blown by the wind. The resinous soot spread its swirls from the iron link-holders.

Jeers at the Emperor could be heard in the crowd. Guttersnipes darted hither and yon, shouting out de-

risive little songs. An old charwoman, having seized one of them and pulled his little shift up over his head, was hitting his bare behind with the resounding sole of her sandal, keeping time to her admonitions:

"There, thou; there, thou! I'll teach thee to sing shameless songs, thou little imp!" The swarthy-faced boy was yelling piercingly.

Another, having clambered up on the back of a comrade, was sketching upon a white wall a caricature with charcoal,—a long-bearded goat in an imperial diadem. A boy somewhat older, probably a school-boy, with a sprightly and knavish face, was scrawling beneath this pictorial effort an inscription in large letters: "This is the impious Julian."

Trying to make his voice rough and fearful, waddling from one leg to the other, like a bear, he was growling:

"The butcher is nearing,
The butcher is nearing,
His sharp knife he's bearing,
His beard he's rearing,—
Its black wool long,
Its black wool strong,—
And to a goat it doth belong."

A passer-by, an old man, in dark garments,—probably an ecclesiastic,—stopped, listened to the boy, shook his head, lifted his eyes up to heaven, and turned to a slave porter:

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. . . . Were we not all better off under *Kappa* and *Chi*?"

"What is the meaning of *Kappa* and *Chi*?"

"Dost thou not grasp it? With the Greek letter *Kappa* beginneth the name of Constantius, whereas *Chi* is the

first letter in the word Christos. Nor Constantius, nor Christ, say I, has wrought any evil to the inhabitants of Antioch,—not like all these sundry fly-by-night philosophers. . . ."

"What's right is right! Times were better under *Kappa* and *Chi!*"

A drunken tatterdemalion, having overheard this witticism, with an exultant air rushed off to spread it through the streets.

"Things weren't so bad under *Kappa* and *Chi!*" he yelled. "Long live *Kappa* and *Chi!*"

The jest flew over all Antioch, its senseless incontrovertibility finding favour with the rabble.

A still greater merriment reigned in an inn opposite the baths, belonging to Syrax, the Armenian from Cappadocia; he had long since transferred his enterprise from the environs of Cæsarea, near Macellum, into Antioch. Out of goatskins, out of enormous clay amphoræ, the wine was drawn off freely into pewter mugs. Here, as everywhere else, the Emperor was the subject of conversation. The little Syrian soldier, Strombic, was especially noticeable for his eloquence,—the very same Strombic who had taken part in the expedition of Julian, when he had been Cæsar, against the Northern barbarians of Gaul. Alongside of him was his steadfast fellow-traveller and crony, the Sarmatian Aragaris of gigantic stature. Strombic felt as contented as a fish in water. More than of aught else in the world was he fond of all sorts of mutinies and uprisings. He was preparing to deliver a speech. An old woman, a rag-picker, had imparted the latest bit of news:

"We are lost,—lost, every single one of us. God hath punished us! Yesterday a neighbour woman of mine was

telling us such things that we would not believe her at first."

"Well, gammer, tell us about it,—do."

"In Gaza, my dears,—it happened in the city of Gaza. The pagans did fall upon a nunnery. They dragged out the nuns, stripped them, tied them up to posts in the square, slit open their bodies, and, having sprinkled their plucked inwards with barley, did cast the same, still quivering, to the swine!"

"I myself have seen," added a young webster, with a pale, obstinate face, "at Heliopolis, nigh Libanus, a pagan, devouring raw the liver of a slain deacon."

"Abomination!" uttered a coppersmith, frowning. Many crossed themselves.

With the aid of Aragaris, Strombic scrambled up on a sticky table, with its pool of wine, and, imitating orators, with a majestic mien turned to the crowd. Aragaris was approvingly nodding his head and pointing to him with pride:

"Citizens!" Strombic commenced, "until when, I ask, must we endure such things? Know ye that Julian has sworn, should he return from Persia a victor, to gather all our sainted men and to cast them to the beasts to be devoured? That he has sworn to turn the porticoes of basilicas into hay lofts, their altars into stables? . . ."

Into the doors of the inn there rolled headlong a hunch-backed little ancient, pale with fright,—the husband of the rag-picker,—himself a glazier. He stopped in despair, smote his thighs with both hands, let his eyes rove over all those present, and babbled out:

"Have ye heard? There's something for ye! Two hundred dead bodies in the wells and water-sewers!"

"When? Where? What dead bodies? What is it?"

"Quiet, quiet!" the glazier fell to brandishing his arms, and continued in a mysterious whisper: "They do be saying that the Apostate has already for long been resorting to divination, by means of the inwards of living people,[32] as to the outcome of his war with the Persians. . . ."

And he added, unable to catch his breath from enjoyment:

"In the basements of the palace at Antioch they managed to find chests full of bones. The bones, now, be human bones!—Whereas in the city of Carrhæ, not far from Edessa, they found in an underground idol-temple the corpse of a pregnant woman, hung up by her hair,—her abdomen slit, the infant taken out of her womb: Julian was divining by the liver of the unborn babe as to the future,—forever guessing about his cursed war with the Persians, about his victory over the Christians. . . ."

"Ho, Gluturinus,—is it true that in the cesspools they be finding human bones? Thou shouldst know," asked a cobbler.

Gluturinus, a cleaner of cloacas, was standing near the doors, not daring to enter, because he gave off a vile stench. When the question was put to him, he, as was his wont, fell to smiling bashfully and to blinking his inflamed eyelids.

"Nay, honoured sirs," he answered meekly. "We have found infants. Also the skeletons of asses and of camels. But human ones, somehow, are not to be seen. . . ."

When Strombic began speaking again, the cleaner of cesspools looked upon him reverently, and, scratching his bare leg against the jamb of the door, listened with inexpressible enjoyment.

"Men and brethren, let us avenge ourselves!" the orator was exclaiming fervently. "Let us die for liberty, even as the ancient Romans did. . . ."

"What art thou splitting thy throat for?" the cobbler suddenly grew angry. "When it comes down to real work, thou, never fear, wilt be the first to slip away, but thou dost send others to their death. . . ."

"Cowards,—ye cowards!" a berouged and bewhitened woman thrust herself into the conversation,—a street trollop, in motley, poor array, called by her admirers simply the She-Wolf. "Do ye know," she continued with indignation, "what the holy martyrs Macedonius, Theodulus and Tatian said to their executioners?"

"We know not. Speak on, She-Wolf!"

"I heard it myself. In Phrygian Myrrha, three youths, Macedonius, Theodulus and Tatian, on a certain night did enter a Hellenic temple and cast down the idols, to the glory of God. The Proconsul Amachius seized these persecuted confessors, and, having laid them upon grid-irons, did order the fire to be brought to a blaze. But all they said was: 'If thou, Amachius, art fain to taste of fried meat, turn us over on the other side, that we may not prove insufficiently grilled to thy taste.' And they all three burst into laughter, and spat in his face. And many beheld how an angel flew down with three crowns.—Would ye have answered thus? No fear! All ye can do is shiver for your own hides. 'Tis nauseating to look at ye!" The She-Wolf turned away with contempt.

Cries reached them from the street.

"Can they be breaking up the idols now?" the glazier perked up.

"Citizens, follow me!" Strombic was brandishing his

arms. He wanted to jump off the table, but, slipping up, would have crashed against the floor, had not the faithful Aragaris received him in his arms with tenderness. They all darted for the doors. From the main street of Syngón an enormous crowd was advancing, and, having dammed up the confined lane, halted before the baths.

"The ancient Pamva! The ancient Pamva!" they informed one another with joy. "Out of the desert has he come to expose the populace, to overthrow the great, to save the lowly!"

XI

THE ancient had a coarse face, with broad cheek bones; he was all grown over with hair; instead of a tunic, there enveloped him a patched sack of coarse cloth; instead of a chlamys,—a dusty ram's pelt, with a cowl for his head; as he walked he made a clinking noise with his long, sharp ferruled stick. Twenty years had Pamva gone unwashed, for that he deemed cleanliness of body sinful, believing that there was an especial devil of corporeal abstersion. In a fearful desert,—the Berrhœan, near Chalybon, to the east of Antioch,—where serpents and scorpions made their nests at the bottom of parched-up wells, he dwelt, in just such a well, his nurture each day being five stalks of a special variety of reed, farinaceous and sweet. He had barely escaped death from exhaustion. Thereupon his disciples began lowering food to him. He permitted himself to indulge in a daily ration of half a *sextarius* [33] of lentils, dampened with water. His vision weakened, his skin became covered with scurf. He added a little oil,—but began accusing himself of pampering his belly.

Pamva learned from his disciples that the sheep of Christ were being harried by the fiercely cruel wolf-Antichrist, the Emperor Julian; he forsook his desert, and had come to Antioch to hearten those who had grown faint of faith.

"Hearken, hearken. . . . The ancient is speaking!"

Pamva ascended the staircase leading to the baths,

halted upon the marble landing, near the base of the lamps, and made a sweeping gesture about him with his hand, indicating the pagan temples, the Thermæ, the shops, the palaces, the courts of justice, the monuments.

"Not one stone shall be left upon another! All shall pass, all shall perish. A fire shall blaze up and devour the universe. The heavens shall curl up with a noise, even as a charred scroll of parchment. 'Twill be the fearful judgment day of Christ,—a spectacle unencompassable! Whither should I turn mine eyes? What should I admire? Aphrodite, perchance,—the goddess of love, with her little son Eros, quivering in her nudity before the face of the Crucified? Or Zeus, with his extinguished thunder-bolts, and all the Olympian gods, fleeing before the thunder-bolts of the All-Highest? Exult, ye martyrs! Wax merry, ye persecuted! Where be your judges, —the Roman commanders, the proconsuls? Behold, they are surrounded with a blaze more vehement than that whereon they did burn the Christians. Philosophers, who took pride in vain wisdom, shall blush for shame before their disciples, as they flame in Gehenna, and neither the syllogisms of Aristotle, nor the proofs of Plato shall avail them more! Their tragedians shall fall to wailing, as they have never wailed in any one of the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus! Their dancers upon the tight rope shall commence leaping in the fires of hell, with a nimbleness never seen before!—Thereupon we, men uncouth and ignorant, shall quake for joy, and shall say to the powerful, the wise and the proud: 'Lo, behold the Bemocked, behold the Crucified, the Son of a carpenter and a charwoman, behold the King of Judæa, covered with purple, crowned with thorns! Behold the Breaker of the Sabbath, the Samaritan, the Possessed of the Devil!

Behold Him whom ye have bound with ropes in the Prætorium, in whose face ye did spit, whom ye did give gall and vinegar to drink! And we shall hear in answer a wailing and gnashing of teeth,[34] and we shall laugh a bit, and shall sate our heart with merriment.—Yea, come Thou, Lord Jesus!"

Gluturinus, the cleaner of cloacas, fell on his knees, and, blinking his inflamed eyelids, as though he were beholding the coming Christ, was stretching out his arms towards Him. The coppersmith, clenching his fists, froze to the spot, like a bull ready to take a fearful leap. The pale-faced, lanky webster, trembling in all his members, was smiling a meaningless smile and muttering: "Lord, Lord, have mercy upon us!" Upon the coarse faces of the vagrants and the day-labourers there was an expression of the malevolently joyous triumph of the weak over the strong, of the slaves over the masters. The harlot, She-Wolf, with her teeth bared, was laughing most softly, and an untamable thirst for vengeance sparkled in her eyes, inebriate and ominous.

Suddenly there came the clanking of arms, a measured, heavy tramping. From around the corner appeared Roman warriors,—the night watch. In front of them marched the Prefect of the East, Sallustius Secundus. His head typified the Roman bureaucrat,—square, with a humped aquiline nose, with a broad, bare skull, with an intelligent, calm and kindly gaze; a simple senatorial toga with the laticlave enveloped him; there was nothing at all imposing in his bearing, save the simple nobility of an ancient patrician.

Out from behind the round, distant roof of the Pantheon, erected by Antiochus Seleucus, there slowly swam up an enormous, dully scarlet moon; its ominous

reflections sprang up trembling upon the brazen Roman shields, helmets and cuirasses.

"Disperse, citizens," Sallustius addressed the crowd. "Through the decree of the blessed Augustus nocturnal assemblages on the streets are forbidden."

The rabble began rumbling and grew turbulent. Urchins set up whistling; a piping, impudent little voice caught up the snatch:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!
To poor cockerels is woe,
And to the bullocks white as snow,—
For as victims to vile gods,
Will the Emperor make them go!"

There sounded forth the rapid, ominous clangour of iron,—the Roman legionaries had all simultaneously drawn their swords out of their scabbards, ready to throw themselves upon the mob.

The ancient Pamva fell to striking the sharp ferrule of his staff against the marble, and set up the shout:

"Hail, brave Satanic host,—hail, most wise Roman commander! Ye must have recalled, 'twould seem, the times of eld, when ye did burn us, did teach us ancient philosophy, whereas we did pray to God for ye. Ah, well,—good greetings! . . ."

The legionaries lifted up their swords. The prefect stopped them with a movement of his hand. He saw that the mob was within his power.

"What do ye threaten us with, ye silly ones?" continued Pamva, addressing Sallustius. "What can ye do? There will suffice to us but one dark night and two or three torches, in order to avenge ourselves. Ye fear the Alemanni and the Persians; we be more dreadful than

the Alemanni and the Persians! We be everywhere,—we be in your midst, countless, unseizable! No boundaries have we, no fatherland; we recognise but one republic,—all creation! We be but of yesterday, and already we fill the universe,—fill your cities, strongholds, islands, municipalities, councils, camps, tribes, *decuriæ* palaces, your senate, your forum,—only your temples do we still leave to you. O, how we would exterminate you, were it not for our meekness, for our mercy, for our desire to be killed rather than kill! No need have we of the sword, nor of fire,—there be so many of us, that all of us have but to withdraw simultaneously,—and ye are lost, your cities shall be desolated, ye shall be horrified at your loneliness, at the silence of the universe; all life would stop, stricken by death. Remember, then,—the Roman Empire is preserved only through our Christian forbearance!"

All eyes were turned upon Pamva; none remarked how a man in the coarse, old chlamys of a peripatetic philosopher, with a yellow, emaciated face, with matted hair and a long black beard, surrounded by several travelling companions, rapidly walked through the Roman soldiers, who respectfully made way for him. He bent towards the prefect Sallustius and whispered in his ear:

"Why tarriest thou?"

"If we wait, they will disperse of themselves. Even without this the Galileans have too many martyrs to be creating new ones,—they fly towards death as flies towards honey."

The man in the garb of a philosopher, stepping forward, pronounced in a loud, firm voice, like a military leader, used to command:

"Drive the crowd apart! Seize the rebels!"

All turned around at once. There resounded a cry of horror:

"The Augustus,—Augustus Julian!"

The warriors threw themselves upon the mob with bared swords; a little crone, a rag-picker, was knocked down. She beat about and squealed at the feet of the legionaries. Some ran. Ahead of anybody else disappeared the little Strombic. There ensued a *mêlée*. Stones began to fly. The coppersmith, defending Pamva, threw a stone at a legionary, but hit the She-Wolf, who was standing alongside of him. She cried out faintly and fell down, bathed in blood, under the impression that she was dying a martyr.

A warrior seized Gluturinus. But the cleaner of cloacas gave himself up with such readiness,—the lot of a sufferer, revered of all, seeming to him a paradise by comparison with his usual half-starved life,—and there was such a vile stench from his tatters that the legionary with repugnance immediately released his captive.

A driver, with an ass loaded with fresh cabbage, had accidentally gotten into the midst of the crowd. All the time, with mouth gaping, he had been listening to the ancient. Noting the danger, he was fain to flee, but his ass turned obdurate. In vain did the driver belabour him from behind with a stick and urge him on; sticking his front legs firmly against the ground, with his ears bent back and his tail raised aloft, the beast was braying deafeningly. And for a long while this asinine braying sounded above the crowd, drowning out the moans of the dying, the cursing of the soldiers, the prayers of the Christians.

The physician Oribasius, who had been among the fellow-travellers of Julian, walked up to the latter:

"Julian, what art thou doing? Is it worthy of thy wisdom? . . ."

The Augustus bestowed such a look upon him that the physician stopped in the middle of his speech and fell silent.

Not only had Julian changed, but he had also aged of late,—upon his sunken face there was that pitiful, frightful expression which is to be found on the faces of men possessed by a slow, incurable malady, or a single, all-engulfing idea, approaching madness.

In his powerful hands he was tearing and crumpling, without himself noticing it, a papyrus scroll that had by chance fallen into his hands,—his own decree. Finally, having looked straight into the eyes of Oribasius, he uttered in a dull, stifled whisper:

"Get thee gone from me, and let all of ye get gone from me, with your counsels, ye simpletons! I know what I do. With scoundrels who do not believe in the gods one cannot speak as one would with men,—one must exterminate them, like beasts of prey! . . . And, finally, what ill is there if ten or a score of Galileans be slain by the hand of a Hellene?"

Through Oribasius' mind flashed the thought: "How he resembleth, in his moments of fury, his cousin Constantius!"

Julian cried out to the mob in a voice which to himself seemed that of another, and fearful:

"As long as, by the grace of the gods, I am Emperor, do ye obey me, Galileans! Ye may deride my beard and my raiment, but not the law of Rome. Remember: I punish ye not for your faith, but for your uprising.—Put the miscreant in chains!"

He indicated Pamva with a quivering hand. The

ancient was seized by two flaxen-fair, blue-eyed barbarians.

"Thou liest, blasphemer!" vociferated the exulting Pamva. "Thou dost punish us for our faith in Christ! Wherefore, then, dost thou not forgive me, as on a time thou didst Máris, the blind man of Chalcedon? Wherefore, as is thy wont, dost thou not cover thy outrage with a kindness,—thy fish-hook with bait? Where is thy philosophy? Or are the times no longer what they were? Hast gone too far?—Brethren, let us not dread the Cæsar of Rome, but the God of Heaven! . . ."

No one any longer thought of flight. These martyrs were infecting one another with fearlessness. The Batavians and the Celts were horrified by this eagerness to die, by these laughing, meek and insane faces. Even children cast themselves under the blows of the swords and the spears. Julian was fain to stop the slaughter, but it was too late,—"the bees were swarming to the honey." He could but exclaim, with despair and contempt:

"Miserable ones! If life has grown wearisome to ye, is it so hard a matter to find ropes and abysses? . . ."

But Pamva, bound, lifted up into the air, was crying still more joyously:

"Massacre,—massacre us, Romans,—yet shall we be multiplied many fold! Chains are our freedom, weakness is our strength,—our victory lies in death!"

XII

Down the current of the Orontes, some forty stadia from Antioch, was situated the famous grove of Daphne, consecrated to the god Apollo.

Once a virginal nymph—so sang the poets—had fled from the banks of the Peneus, to escape the attentions of Apollo, and had halted on the banks of the Orontes, exhausted, being overtaken by the god. She addressed a prayer to her mother, Latona, and the latter, to deliver her from the embraces of the Sun, transformed her into the laurel tree,—Daphne.[35] Since that time Apollo loveth the Daphne above all the other trees, and with the proud verdure of the laurel, impenetrable to the rays of the sun, yet nevertheless ever caressed by them, doth he entwine his lyre and his curly locks,—Phœbus frequents the spot of the transformation of Daphne, the thick grove of laurels upon the plain of the Orontes, and, in pensive yearning, breathes in the fragrance of the dark leafage, warmed, but not vanquished by, the sun; mysterious and melancholy even on the brightest noon-day. Here men have reared up an altar to him and every year hold high festival, with sacred celebrations—panegyrics—in honour of the God of the Sun.

Julian had left Antioch early in the morning, having purposely refrained from warning any one,—he desired to find out if the Antiochenes remembered the sacred festival of Apollo. As he journeyed he had visions of the

festival, expecting to behold throngs of pilgrims, choruses in honour of the God of the Sun, libations, the smoke of incense, youths and maidens ascending the steps of the temple in white garments,—the symbol of incorrupt youth.

The way was hard. A sultry wind was blowing in gusts from the stony plains of the Berrhœa in Chalybon. The air was permeated with the acrid, burning smell of a forest fire, its smoke spreading wide from the thickly wooded narrow passes of Mount Casius. The dust irritated the eyes and the throat, gritting on the teeth. Through the smoky, inflamed murk the sunlight seemed turbidly-red, sickly.

But no sooner had the Emperor set foot within the primordial grove of the Daphnean Apollo than a fragrant freshness enveloped him. It was hard to believe that this paradise was situated at a distance of but a few paces from the sultry road. The grove was eighty stadia in circumference. Here, beneath the impenetrable vaults of the gigantic laurels, attaining their growth enduring many centuries, eternal twilight reigned.

The Emperor was struck by the deserted scene,—there were no pilgrims, nor sacrifices, nor incense,—no preparations whatsoever for the holiday. He reflected that the populace must be near the temple, and walked on farther. But with every step the grove became more and more deserted. The strange quietude was not broken by a single sound, as is the case in abandoned cemeteries. Even the birds sang not,—they flew in here but rarely: the shade of the laurels was too gloomy. A cicada did strike up its stridulent song in the grass, but at once fell silent, as though frightened by its own voice. Only in a narrow little strip of sunlight the noon-day insects

buzzed faintly and somnolently, without daring to fly out of the sunbeam into the surrounding gloom.

Julian would occasionally come out into broader alleys, between two velvety, titanic walls of the age-old cypresses, which threw a shadow as black as coal, almost like that of night. They breathed forth a sweet and ominous fragrance. Here and there hidden underground waters fed the soft moss. At every turn wimpled well-springs, chill as just melted snow, but soundless, grown mute from sadness, like all things in this bewitched forest. In one place, from the crevice of a stone, grown over with moss, radiant drops oozed out and fell one by one. But the deep mosses stilled their fall; the drops were voiceless, like the tears of an unuttered love.

At times he came upon whole dales of narcissi, daisies and lilies, growing wild. Here were many butterflies,—not bright-coloured ones, but black. The ray of the mid-day sun with difficulty penetrating the grove of laurels and cypresses, grew wan, almost lunar, funereal and tender, as though it were penetrating through a black web or the smoke of a funerary torch.

It seemed as if Phœbus had grown pale forever from his inconsolable sad yearning for Daphne, who under the most fervid caresses of the god remained as dark and impervious as ever,—as ever preserving with her branches the nocturnal coolness and shade. And everywhere, throughout the grove, there reigned neglect, quiet, the sweet pensiveness of the enamoured god.

The marble, grandiose steps and pillars of the Daphnean temple, erected in the time of the Diadochi, already flashed in view, blindingly white among the cypresses,—but Julian had not as yet met any one.

Finally he caught sight of a boy of some ten years,

who was walking along a path thickly grown over with hyacinths. He was a puny child, probably ailing; his black eyes, with a strange glow, stood out strangely upon a pale face of an ancient, purely Hellenic splendid beauty; his golden hair fell in soft curls upon a slender neck, and little bluish veins, like those on the too-transparent petals of flowers grown in darkness, were visible on his temples.

"Dost know, my child, where the priests and the people are?" queried Julian.

The child made no answer, as though he had not heard.

"Hearken, lad,—canst thou not lead me to the high priest of Apollo?"

He softly shook his head and smiled.

"What is the matter with thee? Why dost thou not answer?"

Thereupon the beautiful little Adonis pointed to his lips, then to both his ears, and once more, no longer smiling, shook his head. Julian reflected: "This must be a born deaf-mute." The boy, having laid a finger on his lips, was gazing at the Emperor from under his brows.

"An ill portent!" said Julian in a whisper.

And he became almost frightened, in the quiet, the neglect and the gloom of the grove of Apollo, with this deaf-mute child, as splendidly beautiful as a little god, who was intently and enigmatically looking into the Emperor's eyes.

Finally the boy indicated to the Emperor a little old man, coming out from behind the trees, in patched and soiled garb, by which the Emperor recognised a priest. Bowed down, decrepit, slightly swaying, like a man who

had imbibed a great deal, the little old man was laughing and muttering something as he walked. He had a red nose and a smooth round patch of baldness that covered almost his entire head, and was framed with fine grey little curls, so light and downy that they, standing almost erect, surrounded his bald spot; in the purblind, teary eyes gleamed slyness and good nature. He was carrying a rather large osier basket.

"Art thou a priest of Apollo?" asked Julian.

"I am that very same! My name is Gorgius. But what is it thou seekest here, my good man?"

"Couldst thou show me where the head priest of the temple is, and the pious pilgrims?"

Gorgius at first made no answer, merely placing his basket on the ground; then he fell to rubbing assiduously his bald pate with his palm; finally, he put his arms akimbo, inclined his head to one side, and, not without knavishness, puckered up his left eye.

"And why should I not, myself, be the head priest of Apollo?" he uttered with deliberation. "And whatever worshippers art thou speaking of, my son,—may the Olympians be gracious to thee!"

He reeked of wine. Julian, to whom this high priest seemed indecent, was already preparing to deliver a strong censure.

"Thou must be drunk, old man! . . ."

Gorgius was not in the least abashed,—he merely fell to rubbing his bare pate still more assiduously and puckered up his eye with still greater knavishness.

"Drunk I am not. Well, I may have taken five goblets or so because of the holiday! . . . And then, it must be said, not out of gladness do I drink, but out of sadness. That is the way of it, my son,—may the Olympians be

gracious to thee! . . . Well, and whoever mayst thou be? To judge by thy garb, a wandering philosopher, or a schoolmaster out of Antioch?"

The Emperor smiled and nodded his head. He wanted to interrogate the priest.

"Thou hast surmised it. I am a teacher."

"A Christian?"

"Nay,—a Hellene."

"Well, so be it,—for there be many of them traipsing around here,—the atheists. . . ."

"Thou still hast not told me, old man,—where is the populace? Have many offerings been brought from Antioch? Are the choruses in readiness?"

"Offerings? So that is what thou hast set thy heart on!" The little old man burst into laughter, and lunged forward so that he almost fell. "Well, brother, 'tis a long time since we have seen aught of that sort,—not since the days of Constantine! . . ."

Gorgius made a gesture of hopelessness and emitted a whistle:

"That is over and done with! Men have forgotten the gods. . . . 'Tis not only offerings we lack,—at times we have not e'en a handful of sacrificial flour, to bake a wafer for the god,—not e'en a grain of incense, nor a drop of oil for the lamps,—all that is left is to lie down and die! That is the state of things, my son,—may the Olympians be gracious to thee! The monks have filched everything away from us. And they are fighting, to boot,—waxing fat and kicking. . . . Our little song is sung! These be evil times. . . . And yet thou sayest,—drink not. One can not help but drink, honourable sir. If it were not for my drinking I would have hung myself long ago! . . ."

"Can it be that not a single one of the Hellenes has come to the great holiday?" asked Julian.

"None, save thee, my son! I am the priest, thou art the populace. And so we will offer the sacrifice together."

"Thou hast said but now that thou hast no sacrifice."

Gorgius with pleasure caressed his bald pate.

"There is no sacrifice from outsiders,—but there is one of my own. I took care of it myself! For three days Euphorion and I"—he indicated the deaf-mute boy—"did starve to save up the money for a sacrifice to Apollo. Behold!"

He lifted up the osier-lid of the basket,—a trussed-up goose thrust out his head, and fell to gabbling, striving to get loose.

"He-he-he! Wherein is this not a beautiful little sacrifice?" the little old man smiled with pride. "The goose, although neither young nor fat, is nevertheless a good bird, and sacred. The smoke from the roast will be tantalising. The god must be glad e'en for this, according to the present times! . . . The gods have a hankering for geese," added he, puckering up his eye with a sly and penetrating air.

"Art thou long a priest?" asked Julian.

"Quite long. Some forty years,—perhaps e'en more."

"Thy son?" the Emperor indicated Euphorion, who was looking all the time intently and meditatively, as though trying to surmise what they were speaking about.

"Nay, he is not my son. I am all alone,—no children, no kin. Euphorion is my helper whenever I officiate in divine service."

"Who, then, are his parents?"

"The father I know not,—and hardly any one knows. But his mother is the great sibyl Diotima, who lived for

many years in this temple. She spake with none, nor lifted up the veil from her face before men, and was as chaste as a vestal. When she gave birth to a child we were amazed, and knew not what to think. But a certain wise hierophant, a centenarian, told us . . ."

At this Gorgius with a mysterious air screened his mouth with his palm and whispered in the ear of Julian, as though the boy might hear:

"The hierophant said that the child was not the son of a man, but of a god, who had descended mysteriously in the night into the embraces of the sibyl, as she slept within the temple.—Dost thou see how splendidly beautiful he is?"

"The deaf-mute—the son of a god?" uttered the Emperor with wonder.

"What of that?" retorted Gorgius. "If, in such times as ours, the son of a god and a prophetess were not deaf-mute he would be bound to die for grief. Then, too,—dost see how thin and pale he is? . . ."

"Who knows?" said Julian in a whisper, with a sad smile. "Mayhap thou art right, old man,—'tis best in our times for a prophet to be deaf-mute. . . ."

Suddenly the boy walked up to Julian, quickly seized him by the hand, and, having looked into his eyes with a deep, profound, strange gaze, kissed him. A shudder ran through Julian.

"My son!" uttered the little old man with a solemn and joyous smile, "may the Olympians be gracious to thee! Thou must, indeed, be a good man. My boy never caresses the evil and the impious. As for the monks, he flees them like the plague. It seems to me he sees and hears more than thou and I together, only he can not tell us of it. I have chanced to come upon him, alone in

the temple; he sits for whole hours through before the statue of Apollo, and appears to be communing with the god. . . ."

The face of Euphorion darkened; very softly he went away from them.

Gorgius with vexation smote his bald pate, shook himself, and spake:

"Why, how I have lost track of time in chattering with thee! The sun is high. 'Tis time to offer the sacrifice. Let us go."

"Bide a while, old man," uttered the Emperor. "I wanted to ask thee one thing more,—hast thou heard that the Augustus Julian has conceived the idea of establishing anew the worship of the ancient gods?"

"How could one help hearing it!" the priest shook his head and made a hopeless gesture. "What can he do, the poor little fellow! . . . Naught will come of it. 'Tis all in vain. I tell thee,—'tis all over!"

"Thou dost believe in the gods," retorted Julian, "is it possible for the Olympians to forsake men forever?"

The old man sighed heavily and let his head sink.

"My son," he said at last, "thou art young, even though premature grey hairs glitter in thy hair, and on thy brow be wrinkles; but, in those days when my white hair was black, and young maids were lost in admiration as they gazed upon me, I remember how we once were sailing on a ship, not far from Thessalonica, and beheld, from the sea, Mount Olympus; the foot and the middle of the mountain were in mist, whereas the snowy summits were suspended in the air and soared in the glory of the sky and the sea,—unattainable, azure. And I reflected: This is where the gods dwell!—and my soul was moved. But on the same ship there was a certain

ancient, a malicious jester, who styled himself an Epicurean. He pointed to the mountain, and spake: 'Friends, many years have passed since the time that travellers have ascended the summit of Olympus. They saw that this was a most ordinary mountain, every whit the same as others,—there is naught there, save snow, ice, and stones!' Thus spake he, and his speech fell deep into my heart, and I recall it all my life. . . ."

The Emperor smiled.

"Old man, thy faith is child-like. If there be no gods on Olympus, wherefore should they not be higher, in the kingdom of eternal Ideas, in the kingdom of spiritual Light?"

Gorgius let his head sink still lower and scratched his pate in hopelessness.

"That all may very well be. . . . But, nevertheless, 'tis all over. Olympus has become deserted!"

Julian looked at him in silence, perplexed.

"Dost thou see," continued Gorgius, "nowadays the earth doth bring forth men who are as weak as they are cruel; the gods, even when they are waxing wrathful, can but laugh at them,—to exterminate them is not worth their while: the people themselves shall perish from diseases, vices, and sorrows. The gods have become bored with the people,—and the gods have departed. . . ."

"Thou thinkest, Gorgius, that humankind is bound to perish?"

The priest shook his head:

"O-ho-ho, my son—may the Olympians save thee!—everything has gone to wrack and ruin. The earth is growing old. The rivers run slower. The flowers in spring are no longer as fragrant. Recently an old shipman was telling me that, approaching to Sicily, one can no longer

see Ætna from the sea at the same distance as formerly,—the air has grown denser, darker; the sun has dimmed. . . . The end of the universe is approaching. . . ."

"Tell me, Gorgius,—does thy memory recall better times?"

The old man grew animated, and his eyes lit up with the fire of recollections.

"When I arrived here, during the first years of the Cæsar Constantine," he spake joyously, "the great panegyrics were still being consummated every year in honour of Apollo. How many enamoured youths and maidens were wont to gather in this grove! And how the moon shone, how fragrant were the cypresses, how the nightingales sang! When their songs died away, the air quavered from kisses and sighs of love in the night, as from the rustling of unseen wings. . . . Such were the times! . . ."

He fell silent in sad meditation.

At this moment, from behind the trees, there reached them plainly the dismal sounds of churchly chanting.

"What is this?" uttered Julian.

"The monks,—every day they pray over the bones of a dead Galilean. . . ."

"What—a dead Galilean here, in the immemorial grove of Apollo?"

"Aye. They call him the Martyr Babyla. 'Tis now ten years ago that the brother of the Emperor Julian, the Cæsar Gallus, transferred the dead bones of Babyla out of Antioch into the Daphnean grove, and built him an imposing sepulchre. Since then our prophecies have fallen silent,—the temple is desecrated, and the god has withdrawn himself. . . ."

" 'Tis sacrilege!" exclaimed the Emperor.

"In that same year," continued the old man, "the sibyl Diotima gave birth to her deaf-mute son, which was an ill portent. The waters of the Castilian Spring, choked up with stones, sank low and lost their prophetic power. One sacred well-spring alone drieth not up; 'tis called the Tears of the Sun,—see there, where my boy is sitting. Drop after drop flows out of the mossy stone. They say, 'tis Helios weeping for the nymph, metamorphosed into the laurel. . . . Euphorion passeth whole days here."

Julian turned around to look. Before the mossy stone the boy sat, motionless, and, having put the palm of his hand underneath the trickle, was gathering the falling drops. A beam of the sun penetrated through the laurels, and the slow-falling tears glistened within it,—pure, soft. The shadows moved queerly; and Julian suddenly imagined he saw two transparent wings fluttering on the back of the boy, who was as splendidly beautiful as a god; he was so pale, so pensive, and so beautiful, that the Emperor reflected: "This is Eros himself, the little ancient god of love, ailing and dying in our age of Galilean despondence. He is gathering the last tears of love, the tears of the god for Daphne,—Daphne who represents perished beauty."

The deaf-mute sat unmoving; a large black butterfly, tender and funerary, descended on his head. He felt it not, nor stirred. It fluttered, an ominous shadow, over his bent head, while the golden Tears of the Sun, one after the other, slowly fell into the palm of Euphorion, and above him circled the sounds of the churchly singing,—funereal, hopeless, resounding constantly louder and louder.

Suddenly, from behind the cypresses, were heard other voices, a-near:

"The Augustus is here! . . ."

"Wherefore should he travel alone to Daphne?"

"How else? To-day are the great panegyrics of Apollo! —Look, here he is!—Julian, we are searching for thee since early morn!"

These were the Greek sophists, scholars, rhetoricians,— the usual travelling companions of Julian: not only that keeper of fasts, the Neo-Pythagorean Priscus of Epirus, but, as well, the jaundiced sceptic Junius Mauricus, and the sage Sallustius Secundus, and the most vainglorious of men, Lubanius, the famous rhetorician of Antioch. The Augustus paid them no attention and did not even greet them.

"What is the matter with him?" whispered Junius in the ear of Priscus.

"Probably he is wroth, for that no preparations have been made for the holiday. We had forgot! Not a single offering. . . ."

Julian turned to the quondam Christian rhetorician, Hekebolius, now the chief priest of Astarte:

"Go to the adjacent chapel and tell the Galileans who are holding service over dead bones to come hither."

Hekebolius set out in the direction of the chapel, hidden by the trees, whence the singing came.

Gorgius, holding in his hands the basket with the goose, stood, without moving, with mouth agape, his eyes popping out. At times, with desperate decision, he would fall to rubbing his bald spot. It seemed to him that he had drunk too much wine and that he was beholding all this in a dream. A cold sweat came out on his brow when he recalled what he had blabbed to this "teacher" anent the Augustus Julian, and anent the gods. His legs

gave way beneath him from horror. He fell down on his knees:

"Have mercy, Cæsar! Forget my daring utterances,—I knew not. . . ."

One of the accommodating philosophers would have thrust the old man away:

"Get thee hence, fool! What art thou pushing thyself forward for?"

Julian forbade him:

"Insult not the priest!—Arise, Gorgius. Here is my hand. Fear not. While I live, none shall do evil either to thee or to thy boy. We have both come to the panegyrics, we both love the olden gods,—let us then be friends, and meet the holiday of the Sun with a joyous heart!"

The churchly chanting fell silent. In the grove of cypresses appeared pale, frightened monks, deacons, and the hierarch himself, who had not had time to take off his vestments. Hekebolius was leading them. The presbyter,—a fat man, with a glossy, coppery-red face, was waddling, puffing, blowing to catch his breath, and wiping the sweat from his forehead. Halting before the Augustus, he bowed low, reaching to the ground with his hand, and said, as though he had sung it, in a thick, pleasant voice for which his parishioners especially loved him:

"May the most humane Augustus be gracious to his unworthy slaves!"

He bowed still lower, and when, gruntingly, he was rising up, two novices, young and nimble, who bore a striking likeness to each other, both lanky, with drawn-out faces as yellow as wax, assisted him on both sides, holding him up by his arms. One of them had forgotten to lay down his censer, and a thin little stream of smoke

was rising up from the embers. Euphorion, catching sight of the monks from afar, rushed off in headlong flight. Said Julian:

"Galileans! I command you to cleanse the sacred grove of Apollo from the bones of a dead man,—before tomorrow night. We desire not to use force, but if our will be not carried out, then we ourselves shall take care that Helios be rid of the sacrilegious proximity of Galilean dust,—I shall despatch my soldiers; they shall dig up the bones, burn them, and strew the ashes in the wind. Such is our will, citizens!"

The presbyter coughed very softly, covering his mouth with his hand, and, finally, in his meekest voice, chanted out:

"Most Gracious Cæsar, this is to us most grievous, inasmuch as 'tis already a long time that the Holy Relics have been resting here at the will of the Cæsar Gallus. But may thy will be done,—I shall inform the bishop."

Murmuring was heard in the throng. A little urchin, who had hidden himself in the laurel grove, did start up the little song:

"The butcher is nearing,
The butcher is nearing,
His sharp knife he's bearing,
His beard he's rearing,—
Its black wool's long,
Its black wool's strong,
And to a goat it doth belong,—
One could weave ropes from it!"

But the mischief-maker was given such a blow in the nape of his neck that he ran off howling.

The presbyter supposing that for the sake of seemli-

ness he ought to put in a defence for the relics, again meekly coughed into his hand and began:

"If Thy Wisdom is pleased to set up this law because of the idol. . . ."

He corrected himself as fast as he could:

"The Hellenic god Helios. . . ."

The Emperor's eyes flashed:

"The idol!—there is your word. What men of folly do ye deem us, asserting that we do deify the substance itself of our eidolons,—copper, stone, wood! All your preachers are desirous of convincing both all others and ourselves, and themselves of this. But 'tis a lie! We revere not the dead stone, copper or wood, but the spirit, the living spirit of beauty in our eidolons, examples of the purest charm divine. Not we are the idolators, but ye, rending each other, like beasts, over *homoousius* and *homoiousius*,—over a simple iota; ye, who osculate the rotted bones of criminals, executed for the infringement of the laws of Rome; ye, who style the fratricide Constantius 'Eternity,' 'Holiness'! Is it not more reasonable to deify a splendidly beautiful sculpture of Phidias, than to bow down before two wooden sticks, laid criss-cross on each other,—an ignominious instrument of torture? Should one blush for ye, or pity ye, or hate ye? 'Tis the limit of insanity and ignominy that the descendants of the Hellenes, who have read Plato and Homer, should be rushing—whither? O abomination!—to the rejected tribe, almost exterminated by Vespasian and Titus,—in order to deify a dead Judæan! . . . And yet ye dare to accuse us of idolatry!"

Imperturbably, now arranging with all his five fingers his silvery-black, soft beard, now wiping the great beads of sweat from his broad, glistening brow, the presbyter

occasionally looked askance at Julian, with fatigue and boredom.

Thereupon the Emperor said to the philosopher Priscus:

"My friend, thou art familiar with the ancient rites of the Hellenes: perform the Delian mysteries necessary for the purification of a temple from the sacrilegious proximity of dead bones. Order also the stone to be raised up from the Castalian Spring, that the god may return to his dwelling, that the ancient prophecies may be renewed."

The presbyter concluded the interview by a most low obeisance, with a resignation in which one felt an insuperable obstinacy.

"May thy will be done, mighty Augustus. We be the children, thou art the father. 'Tis said in the Scripture: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. . . .' " [36]

"Ye hypocrites!" exclaimed the Emperor. "Full well do I know your resignation and obedience. Rise up against me, then, and struggle like men! Your resignation is your serpent's fang. Ye sting with it those before whom ye crawl. Your own Master, the Galilean, has well said of ye: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.' [37] Verily, ye have filled the universe with whited sepulchres and all uncleanness! Ye fall prostrate before dead men's bones and await salvation from them; like grave maggots, ye feed upon corruption. Was that what Jesus taught ye? Did he command ye to hate your brethren, whom ye call

heretics for that they believe not as ye do?—Let, then, be turned against ye out of my lips the word of the Crucified: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . *Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?' " [38]

He turned in order to depart, when suddenly out of the throng stepped forth a little old man with a little old crone and fell down at his feet. Both, in neat, poor garments, benign of mien, amazingly resembling one another, with comely fresh little faces in which there was something childishly-pitiful, with kindly little wrinkles radiating about their purblind eyes, recalled Philemon and Baucis.

"Protect us, righteous Cæsar!" the old man hurriedly began to mumble with his toothless gums. "We have a little house in the suburb, near the foot of the Stavrinus. We have dwelt therein for twenty years, offending no man, revering God. Suddenly, the other day, there come some decurions."

The little old man wrung his hands in despair, and the little old woman wrung hers also—she imitated his every motion involuntarily.

"The decurions come and say: 'The little home is not yours.' 'Wherefore is it not ours? The Lord be with you! We have been living in it for twenty years!' 'Ye live in it, but not legally,—the ground belongs to the god Æsculapius, and the foundation is laid from the stones of his temple. Your ground shall be taken away, and returned to the god.' What is this, then? Have compassion upon us, father! . . ."

The little old couple were standing before him on their knees,—clean, meek, endearing as children, and, in tears, were kissing his feet. Julian noticed around the

neck of the little old woman a small cross of amber.

"Are ye Christians?"

"Aye!"

"I would fain fulfill your request. But what can one do? The ground belongs to the god. I, however, shall order the value of the estate to be paid you."

"Nay, nay!" the little old couple sent up their prayer. "We are not speaking of the money,—we have grown used to the spot. Everything there is ours,—we know every little blade of grass! . . ."

"Everything there is ours," the old woman was repeating, like an echo, "our vineyard, our olives, our little chickens, and our little cow, and our little pig,—all is our own. And there, too, is the little front porch, on which for twenty years we have been wont to sit of evenings, and to warm our old bones in the sun. . . ."

The Emperor, without listening, turned to the frightened throng, standing at a distance:

"Of late the Galileans besiege me with petitions about the restoration of church lands. Thus, the Valentinians from the city of Edessa in Osrhoëne complain against the Arians, who, 'twould seem, have taken church estates away from them. In order to terminate the strife, we gave away one part of the property in dispute to our Gallian veterans, the other to the treasury. We are determined to act similarly in the future as well. You may ask: 'By what right?' But do you not say yourselves that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter heaven? So, you see, I have e'en resolved to assist you in fulfilling a commandment so difficult. As all the world knows, ye sing the praise of poverty, Galileans. Wherefore, then, do ye murmur against me? Taking away from you the prop-

erty you purloined from your own brethren, the Galileans, I do but set you back upon the path of poverty, which is salvation and leadeth straight to the kingdom of heaven. . . ."

An evil smile distorted his lips.

"We are suffering an unjust injury!" vociferated the little old couple.

"Ah, well, then you will bear it a bit!" answered Julian. "Ye must rejoice over injuries and persecutions, as Jesus has taught ye to do. What signify these temporary sufferings in comparison with bliss eternal? . . ."

The little old man was not prepared for such a conclusion; he became confused and lisped with a last hope:

"We be thy faithful slaves, Augustus! My son serves as an assistant to the *strategus* in a distant fortress on the Roman frontier, and his superiors are satisfied with him. . . ."

"Is he also a Galilean?" Julian interrupted him.

"Aye."

" 'Tis well, then,—'tis a good thing that thou thyself hast forewarned me; henceforth Galileans, our evident enemies, must not fill any of the higher posts in the Empire, especially military ones. Again in this, as in much else, I am more in agreement with your Teacher than ye are yourselves. Is it just that judgment according to the laws of Rome be wrought by the disciples of Him who has said: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'?[39] —or that the Christians accept from us the sword for the safeguarding of the Empire, when their Teacher forewarns them: 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword'? [40]—and, in another place, still more plainly, 'Resist not evil with force'? [41] Therefore, being solicitous for the salvation of the souls of the Gali-

leans, we are taking away from them both the Roman justice and the Roman sword, that they may enter the kingdom of heaven with all the greater ease,—defenceless and unarmed, strangers to all that is of this earth! . . ."

With mute, inward laughter, which alone now could slake his hatred, he wheeled about and walked off with rapid strides toward the temple of Apollo.

The little old couple were snivelling, stretching forth their arms:

"Cæsar, have mercy upon us! We did not know. . . . Take our little house, our ground, all that we have,—only have mercy upon our son! . . ."

The philosophers wanted to enter the portals of the temple with the Emperor, but he put them aside with a wave of his hand.

"I have come to the festival alone; alone shall I offer up a sacrifice to the god."

"Let us enter," he turned to the priest. "Lock the door, that none may enter. *Procul este profani!* May the unbelievers go forth!"

The doors were slammed to before the very faces of his friends the philosophers.

" 'The unbelievers!' How like you that?" spoke up Gargilian, perplexed.

Lubanius silently shrugged his shoulders and fell to sulking.

Junius Mauricus, with a mysterious air, led his fellow-speakers off into a corner of the portico, and said something in a whisper, pointing to his forehead:

"Do you understand?"

They all became amazed.

"Can that really be the case? . . ."

He began checking off on his fingers:

"Pale face, blazing eyes, dishevelled hair, uneven steps, incoherent speech. Furthermore,—excessive irritability, hardness of heart. And, finally, this ludicrous war with the Persians,—why, I swear by Pallas, 'tis naught but evident madness! . . ."

The friends got together still more closely and joyously fell to whispering, to gossiping, Sallustius, standing aloof, gazed upon them with a smile of squeamish contempt.

Julian found Euphorion within the temple. The boy was rejoiced to see him, and frequently, during the service, glancing up into the eyes of the Emperor, smiled trustingly as though they held a secret in common.

The gigantic statue of the Daphnean Apollo, illuminated by the sun, reared up in the centre of the temple,—his body of ivory, his raiment of gold, like that of the Zeus of Phidias in Olympia. The god, slightly inclining, was consummating a libation out of a chalice to the Mother Earth with a prayer that she return Daphne to him.

A light little cloud sprang up; the shadows began to tremble on the ivory, aureate-tinted from age, and it appeared to Julian that the god was inclining toward them with a smile of condescension, accepting the last sacrifice of his last worshippers,—a decrepit priest, an apostate Emperor, and a deaf-mute son of a prophetess.

"Here is my reward," prayed Julian, "and I would have no other, Apollo! I render thanks to thee for that I am cursed and rejected,—even as thou; that I live alone and die alone,—even as thou. There, where the rabble prays, God is not. Thou art here, in a desecrated temple. O god, bemocked of men, now art thou more splendidly

beautiful than in the times when men did bow down before thee! In the day designated by the Parca for me also, grant that I be united with thee, O thou joyous one; grant me to die in thee, O Sun,—even as on this altar the fire of the last sacrifice is dying away in thy glow!"

Thus prayed the Emperor, and soft tears coursed down his cheeks, soft drops of sacrificial blood fell, like tears, upon the expiring embers of the altar.

XIII

It was dark in the grove of Daphne. A sultry wind was driving the clouds along. Not a single drop of rain fell upon the earth, parched by the drought. The laurels trembled convulsively with their black branches, stretched toward the sky like imploring arms. The titanic walls of the cypresses were noisy, and this noise resembled the speech of angry old men.

Two men were carefully picking their way through the darkness, in the vicinity of the temple of Apollo. A short little fellow,—his eyes were greenish, like those of a cat, capable of seeing in the night,—was leading a tall man by the hand.

"Oh, oh, oh, little nephew! We shall break our necks in some ditch. . . ."

"Why, there e'en are no ditches here. What art thou turning coward for? Thou hast become an old woman entirely since thou hast been baptised!"

"An old woman! My heart was wont to beat evenly when in the Hyrcanian forest I used to go hunting bears with a boar-spear. Here 'tis another matter! We are bound to dangle side by side on one gallows, little nephew! . . ."

"Well, well, keep still, thou fool!"

The short little fellow again dragged along the tall one, who bore an enormous sheaf of straw behind his shoulders and a pick-axe in his hand. They stealthily made their way to the rear wall of the temple.

"Right here! Use the pick-axe at first. As for the wooden trim on the inside,—chop it up with an axe," said the short fellow, feeling in the bushes a gap in the wall, carelessly stopped up with bricks. The strokes of the pick-axe were muffled by the noise of the wind in the trees. Suddenly there resounded a cry that was like to the crying of an ailing child. The tall fellow shuddered and stopped.

"What is it?"

"The Foul One!" exclaimed the short one, his green, cat-eyes popping out from horror, and clutched at the dress of his comrade.

"Oh, oh, oh, do not abandon me, little uncle! . . ."

"Why, 'tis but a tawny owl. Eh, how scared we did get!"

The enormous night bird fluttered up, swishing its wings, and soared off into the distance, with a prolonged wail.

"Let's drop it," said the tall one. " 'Twill not catch on fire anyway."

"How can it possibly not catch afire? The wood is rotten, dry, worm-eaten; do but touch it, and 'twill fall to powder. 'Twill blaze up from a single spark. Well, well, good fellow, fall to chopping,—do not dawdle!"

And, with impatience, the short one nudged on the tall.

"Now stuff the straw in the hole. There, so,—more, more! To the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! . . ."

"Well, why art thou spinning like a top,—why art thou squirming like an eel? What art thou grinning with all thy teeth for?" snarled back the tall one.

"He, he, he,—how can one help save laugh, little

uncle? Now e'en the angels in the heavens are exulting. Only remember, brother,—should we be caught, deny it not! This is no affair of mine. . . . We shall light up a merry little blaze. Here is the flint,—strike a fire."

"Take thyself to the devil!" The tall fellow tried to push him away. "Thou wilt not entice me, thou accursed new-hatched viper,—faugh! Set it on fire thyself. . . ."

"Oho,—so thou art backing out? . . . Nay, thou art jesting, brother!"

The short fellow shook in fury and clutched the red beard of the giant.

"I shall be the first to tell on thee. They'll believe me. . . ."

"There, there,—let me alone, thou little imp! . . . Let me have the flint! No help for it,—we must end the matter."

The sparks flew. The short fellow, for the sake of convenience, lay down on his belly, and his resemblance to a new-hatched viper became still more striking. Fiery little streams started running over the straw, saturated with pitch. The smoke began to swirl. The pitch crackled. The flame flared up and lit with a purple reflection the frightened face of the giant Aragaris and the crafty little monkey phiz of the little Strombic. He resembled a hideous little fiend; he clapped his palms, he hopped about, he laughed, like one drunk or demented.

"We shall destroy everything, we shall destroy everything, to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! He, he, he! The little serpents, the little serpents,—see how they run? Eh? . . . A merry little blaze, little uncle! . . ."

In that sensual laughter of his there was the eternal bestiality of man,—the delight in destruction.

Aragaris said, pointing into the darkness:

"Dost hear? . . ."

The grove was as deserted as before; but in the whining of the wind, in the rustling of the leaves, they seemed to hear human whispering and speech. Aragaris suddenly jumped up and fell to running. Strombic clutched the hem of his tunic and fell to squealing piercingly:

"Little uncle! Little uncle! Take me up on thy shoulders. Thou hast long legs. But if thou wilt not, and I fall into their hands,—I shall tell on thee! . . .

Aragaris halted for an instant; Strombic leaped, like a squirrel, upon the shoulders of the Sarmatian, and they rushed off headlong. The little Syrian squeezed hard the giant's ribs with trembling knees, and put his arms around the neck of Aragaris, in order not to fall off. Despite his horror, Strombic was laughing unrestrainably, with an insane laughter, with occasional soft squeals of a mischievous sprightliness.

The incendiaries passed through the grove and ran out into a field, where the dusty, meagre ears of grain had bent low towards the parched earth. Between the clouds, at the edge of the black sky, gleamed a streak of the sinking moon. The wind was whistling piercingly. Hunched up on the shoulders of the giant, the little Strombic with his green, feline pupils, resembled an evil spirit or a were-wolf, sitting astride his victim. A superstitious horror overcame Aragaris,—it suddenly seemed to him that it was not Strombic, but the devil himself, in the guise of an enormous cat, who was sitting astride his shoulders and scratching his face, and squealing, and laughing, and driving him headlong into an abyss. The giant was making enormous leaps, struggling to be rid of his clinging burden; his hair stood up on end, and he

burst into a howl from horror. Showing black with a double shadow on the pallid streak of the horizon, they thus rushed headlong over the dead field with its dusty ears of grain, bent low towards the parched and petrified earth. . . .

. . . . . .

In the meanwhile, in the sleeping chamber of the palace of Antioch, Julian was holding a secret conference with the Prefect of the East, Sallustius Secundus.

"But from where, most gracious Cæsar, shall we obtain the grain for such an army?"

"I have despatched triremes into Sicily, Ægypt, Apulia,—every region where there has been a good crop," answered the Emperor. "I tell thee, grain there shall be."

"And what of money," continued Sallustius. "Is it not more prudent to postpone matters till next year,—to wait a while? . . ."

Julian had been steadily pacing the room with great strides,—suddenly he halted before the old man.

"Wait a while!" he exclaimed in wrath. "'Twould seem as if all of you have conspired. Wait a while! As though I could now wait, and weigh matters, and vacillate. Are the Galileans, then, waiting? Do comprehend, old friend,—I must perform the impossible; I must return from Persia awe-inspiring and great,—or else not return at all. There is no more of compromising. There is no mean. Wherefore do ye tell me of prudence? Or dost thou think that Alexander of Macedonia conquered the world through prudence? Did not, to such moderate folk as you, seem mad this beardless youth, setting out with a handful of Macedonians against the potentate of Asia? Who, then, did bestow victory upon him? . . ."

"I know not," replied the prefect evasively, with a slight smile of scorn. "It seems to me, the hero himself. . . ."

"Not himself, but the gods!" exclaimed Julian. "Dost hear, Sallustius,—the gods may grant to me, as well, a victory,—a still greater than they granted to Alexander! I have begun in Gallia,—I shall end up in India. I shall traverse the whole universe, from the setting to the rising of the sun, like the great Macedonian, like the god Dionysos. We shall see what the Galileans will say then; we shall see how those who now deride the simple garb of the sage will laugh at the sword of the Roman Cæsar, when he shall return a victor from Asia! . . ."

His eyes kindled with a febrile glitter. Sallustius wanted to say something, but let it pass in silence. But when Julian again fell to pacing the room with great, restless strides, the prefect shook his head, and pity lit up in the sage eyes of the old man.

"The army must be ready for the expedition," went on Julian. "Such is my will,—dost thou hear? No excuses, no delays. Thirty thousand men. Arsaces, King of Armenia, hath promised to form an alliance with us. We have grain. What more is needed, then? I must know that at any instant I can set out against the Persians. On this depends not only my fame, the salvation of the Roman Empire, but, as well, the victory of the eternal gods over the Galilean! . . ."

The wide window was open. A dusty, hot wind bursting into the room, made the three slender tongues of flaming wicks sway in the lampad. Cleaving the darkness of the sky, a falling star flickered and died. Julian shuddered,—this was an ill portent.

There was a knocking at the door; voices were heard.

"Who is there? Enter!" said the Emperor.

His friends the philosophers entered. In front of them strode Lubanius; he seemed more puffed up and sulkier than ever.

"Wherefore have ye come?" asked Julian coldly.

Libanius got down on his knees, preserving his supercilious air.

"Release me, Augustus! I can no more live at court. Every day I suffer affronts. . . ."

He spoke for a long while about some gifts or other; about monetary rewards, in which he had been overlooked; about his services, about the magnificent panegyrics wherein he had celebrated the Roman Cæsar.

Julian, without listening, looked with a squeamish ennui at the famous orator, and reflected: "Can this really be the same Libanius, whose speeches entranced me so when I read them in my youth? What pettiness! What vaingloriousness!"

Then they all fell to talking at once,—they disputed, accused one another of impiety, of extortion, of depravity, launching the most absurd bits of slander; this was a most disgraceful domestic war,—not of sages, but of toad-eaters, kicking up their heels from fatness, ready to rend each other to pieces out of vainglory, malice, and ennui. Finally the Emperor uttered in a low voice a single word which caused them all to come to their senses:

"Masters!"

They all fell silent at once, like a frightened flock of chattering jackadaws.

"Masters," he uttered with a bitter smile of scorn, "I have hearkened sufficiently to you; permit me, also, to

tell you a fable.—A certain king of Ægypt had some trained monkeys, who could dance a Pyrrhic war dance; they were tricked out in helmets and in masks; their tails would be hidden under the regal purple, and, when they danced, it was difficult to believe that these were not men. The spectacle found favour for a long while. But on a certain occasion one of the spectators threw a handful of nuts on the stage. And what was the upshot? The actors tore to shreds their purple and the masks, exposed their tails, got down on all fours, fell to squealing and to biting each other and bickering over the nuts.—Thus do certain men execute with pompousness the Pyrrhic dance of wisdom, until the first offering made them. But one has merely to throw a handful of nuts,—and the sages are turned into monkeys,—they expose their tails, they squeal and bicker. How like you my little fable, masters?"

They were all speechless. Suddenly Sallustius very softly took the Emperor by the hand and pointed to the open window.

Over the black rimples of the clouds was slowly crawling, swayed by the strong wind, the scarlet glow of a conflagration.

"A fire! A fire!" they all began talking at once.

" 'Tis beyond the river," conjectured some.

"Not beyond the river, but in the suburb of Garandama!" others corrected.

"Nay, nay,—in Gezira, where the Jews are!"

"Neither in Gezira, nor in Garandama," exclaimed some one with that unrestrainable merriment which possesses the mob at the sight of a conflagration, "but in the grove of Daphne!"

"The temple of Apollo!" uttered the Emperor in a

whisper, and suddenly all his blood rushed to his heart.

"The Galileans," he cried out in a frightful voice, and darted for the door, then for the staircase.

"Slaves! Quickly! A steed and fifty legionaries!"

In a few instants everything was in readiness. A black stallion was led out into the court yard, who trembled with all his body,—dangerous, angrily looking out of the corner of his eye, his pupils shot with blood.

Julian flew at a headlong pace along the streets of Antioch, accompanied by fifty legionaries. The crowd scattered in terror before him. Some one was knocked off his feet,—some one was crushed. Their cries were drowned out by the thundering of the hoofs, by the clangour of arms.

They left the city. The race lasted for more than two hours. Three legionaries fell behind,—their horses dropping dead.

The glow of the conflagration was becoming constantly brighter. There was a smell of smoke. The fields with their dusty ears of grain were lit up by a scarlet reflection. The curious were flocking from all directions, like night moths toward a flame; these were the inhabitants of the surrounding villages and the suburbs of Antioch. Julian noted the joy in their voices and faces, as though these people were running to a festival.

The tongues of fire began to gleam, at last, through the swirls of thick smoke over the black, serrated tips of the grove of Daphne.

The Emperor rode into the sacred enclosure. He beheld a crowd in a turmoil. Many were exchanging jests and laughing. The quiet alleys, for so many years abandoned of all, were now swarming with people. The rabble was defiling the grove; it broke the branches of the ancient

laurels, muddied the well-springs, trampled the tender, slumbrous flowers. The narcissi and lilies, dying, vainly opposed their last freshness against the stifling heat of the conflagration, against the breath of the rabble.

"God's miracle! God's miracle!" the joyous hum hovered over the crowd.

"I saw with my own eyes how the lightning struck and set the roof on fire! . . ."

"Well, 'twas no lightning,—thou liest; the belly of the earth did split open, spewing forth a flame, within the idol temple, under the very idol! . . ."

"And rightly! What abomination they set up! They disturbed the sacred bones! They thought 'twould pass, just so. But they have another guess coming!—There is thy temple of Apollo; and there are thy prophecies over the Castalian waters!—Serve thee right, serve thee right! . . .'

Julian beheld in the crowd a woman, half-clad, dishevelled, probably but now jumped out of bed. She, too, was admiring the fire, with a joyous and meaningless smile, lulling an infant at her breast; tiny tears were sparkling in his eyes; he had been crying, but had fallen quiet, and was with greediness sucking the swarthy, stout breast, smacking his lips, leaning against it with one little hand, stretching out the other chubby one, with its little dimples, towards the fire, as though wanting to reach a shining, gay toy.

The Emperor halted his steed,—it was impossible to make one step farther; the heat blew in blasts in one's face, as from an oven. The legionaries were awaiting orders. But there were no orders to be given,—he understood that the temple was perished.

This was a magnificent spectacle. The edifice was blazing from top to bottom; the interior trim, the rotten walls, the dried-up beams, stakes, joists, rafters,—everything had turned into brands at white heat; they crashed down, and, in fiery whirlwinds, the sparks flew upward to the sky, which was constantly sinking lower and lower,—ominous, bloody; the flame licked the clouds with its long tongues; it beat about in the wind and rumbled, like a heavy curtain.

The leaves of the laurels writhed from the heat, as from pain, and curled up. The tips of the cypresses caught fire with a vivid resinous flame, like gigantic torches; their white smoke seemed the smoke of sacrificial thurifications; drops of resin coursed down copiously, as though the age-old trees, contemporaries of the temple, were weeping for the god with tears of gold.

Julian gazed with an immovable stare at the blaze. He was about to issue some order to the legionaries,—but merely snatched his sword out of its scabbard, reared his horse up on its hind legs, and uttered in a whisper, gritting his teeth in impotent fury:

"The dastards, the dastards! . . ."

From afar was heard the roar of a crowd. He recalled that back of the temple was the sacristy, which held the sacerdotal paraphernalia, and the thought flashed through his mind that the Galileans were plundering the sacred place. He made a sign and with his warriors threw himself in that direction. On their way they were stopped by a sad procession.

Several Roman guards, probably just hastened up from the nearest hamlet of Daphne, were bearing a stretcher in their hands.

"What is this?" asked Julian.

"The Galileans have stoned Gorgius the priest," answered the Romans.

"And the sacristy?"

" 'Tis safe. The priest blocked the door, standing at its threshold, and would not allow the holy place to be desecrated. He stirred not from the spot till he fell down, struck on the head by a stone. Then they killed the boy. The Galilean rabble, having trampled them down, would have broken in the door, had we not come and scattered the crowd."

"Is he alive?" asked Julian.

"He barely breathes."

The Emperor leaped off his steed. The stretcher was softly lowered. He drew near, bent over, and carefully threw back the edge of the familiar, soiled chlamys of the priest, which covered both bodies. Upon a bedding of fresh laurel branches lay the old man; his eyes were closed; his breast heaved slowly. Pity penetrated into the heart of Julian as he glanced at this red nose of the drunkard, who had recently seemed to him unseemly, and as he recalled the meagre goose in its willow basket,—the last sacrifice to Apollo. Drops of blood had come out on the downy hair, as white as snow, and the pointed black leaves of the laurel had twined in a wreath over the head of the priest.

Alongside, on the same litter, reposed the little body of Euphorion. His face, covered with a deathly pallor, was still more splendidly beautiful than in life; upon his tangled aureate hair bloody drops glowed scarlet; his cheek resting on his hand, he seemed to be sleeping a light sleep. Julian reflected:

"Such must be, verily, Eros, the son of the goddess of love, stoned to death by the stones of the Galileans."

And the Roman Emperor reverently sank on his knees before the martyr for the Olympian gods. Despite the destruction of the temple, despite the senseless exultation of the rabble, Julian felt the presence of the god in this death. His heart softened,—even his hatred disappeared. With tears of emotion he bent down and kissed the hand of the sainted ancient.

The dying man opened his eyes.

"Where is the boy?" he asked softly.

Julian carefully placed the old man's hand upon the golden curls of Euphorion.

"Here,—beside thee."

"Is he alive?" asked Gorgius, touching the hair of the child with a last caress. He was so weak that he could not turn his head towards him. Julian had not the heart to reveal the truth to the dying man. The priest turned upon the Emperor a gaze filled with supplication:

"Cæsar, I place him in thy hands. Forsake him not. . . ."

"Rest assured,—I shall do all I can for thy boy."

Thus did Julian receive in his care him to whom even the Roman Cæsar could no more do either good or evil.

Gorgius did not raise his numbing hand from the curls of Euphorion. Suddenly his face became animated; he wanted to say something, but merely babbled incoherently:

"There they are! There they are. . . . I knew 'twas e'en thus. . . . Rejoice ye! . . ."

He looked before him with wide open eyes, sighed, stopped in the middle of his sigh,—and his gaze dimmed. Julian covered the face of him who had gone to his sleep.

Suddenly there burst forth the sounds of churchly

chanting. The Emperor turned around and saw: over the main alley of the cypresses stretched a procession, a countless throng,—ancient hierarchs in gold-broidered vestments, strewn over with precious stones; pompous deacons, with clanking censers; black monks with waxen candles; maidens and youths, in solemn raiment; children with palm branches; up aloft, over the throng, upon a magnificent chariot, shone the sarcophagus of St. Babyla; the flame of the conflagration was refracted and multiplied upon its pallid silver. These were the holy remains, driven out by the command of the Cæsar from Daphne into Antioch. The exile had become transformed into a triumphal procession.

"Clouds and darkness *are* round about him," drowning out the whistling of the wind, the roaring of the conflagration, soared the exultant songs of the Galileans toward the sky, lit up with the glow of the fire.—"Clouds and darkness *are* round about him."

"A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

"The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." [42]

And Julian paled, as he heard what daring brazenness and triumphant exultation sounded in the last outcry:

"Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods!" [43]

He leaped up on his steed, bared his sword, and cried out:

"Soldiers, after me!"

He would have thrown himself into the midst of the throng, to disperse the rabble, to overturn the sarcophagus with the holy remains, and scatter the dead

man's bones. But some hand seized his steed by the bridle.

"Hence!" he began to cry in his fury, and had already lifted up his sword to strike; but at the same instant his arm sank,—before him was the sage old man, sad and calm of face,—Sallustius Secundus, who had hastened up from Antioch.

"Cæsar! Fall not upon the unarmed. Recollect thyself! . . ."

Julian put up his sword in its scabbard.

The brazen helmet, as though it were red-hot, pressed and seared his head. Having torn it off and cast it to the ground, he mopped the large beads of sweat. Then, alone, without his warriors, with bared head, he rode up to the throng and brought the procession to a halt with a wave of his hand. All recognised him. The chanting fell silent.

"Antiochenes!" uttered Julian, almost calmly, restraining himself through a fearful effort of his will. "Know ye,—the rebels, and the incendiaries of the temple of Apollo, shall be punished without mercy. Ye laugh at my compassion,—we shall see how ye will laugh at my wrath. The Roman Augustus could obliterate your city from off the face of the earth, so that men would forget about Great Antioch. But lo, I do but leave you. I am setting out on an expedition against the Persians. If the gods have willed for me to return a victor, woe be unto ye, rebels! Woe be unto Thee, Thou Son of the carpenter, thou Nazarene! . . ."

He held out his sword above the crowd.

Suddenly it appeared to him that a strange voice, apparently not human, uttered behind him distinctly:

"The Nazarene, the Son of the carpenter, is preparing a coffin for thee!"

A shudder ran through Julian; he turned around to look, but saw no one. He passed his hand over his face.

"What is this? Or did I imagine it?" said he, barely audibly and in distraction.

At this moment, in the interior of the blazing temple, there resounded a deafening crash,—part of the wooden roof had collapsed directly upon the gigantic statue of Apollo. The idol fell off its pediment; the golden chalice, wherewith he wrought an eternal libation to Mother Earth, sent out a piteous ring. The sparks, in a pillar of fire, flew up to the clouds. A graceful column of the portico swayed, and its Corinthian capital, with a delicate charm in its very destruction, like a white lily with a broken stalk, bent over and fell to the earth. To Julian it seemed that the entire blazing temple, in its fall, would crush him.

But the ancient psalm of David, for the glory of the God of Israel, rose up to the night sky triumphantly, drowning out the roaring of the conflagration and the fall of the idol:

"Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods!"

XIV

JULIAN passed the winter in hurried preparations for the campaign. In the beginning of spring, on the fifth of March, he set out from Antioch with an army of five and sixty thousand men.

The snow was thawing on the mountains. In gardens the almond-trees, bare, devoid of leaves, had already become covered with blossoms, white and pink, translucent in the sun. The soldiers were going to the war gaily, as upon a holiday.

On the Samosatian wharfs, out of enormous cedars, firs and oaks, hewed down in the ravines of the Taurus, a fleet of twelve hundred ships had been built, and floated down the Euphrates to the city of Cyllene.

Julian, by rapid marches, went in the direction of Carrhæ through Hieropolis; and farther, towards the south, along the very shore of the Euphrates, to the frontier of Persia. To the north had been despatched another army of thirty thousand, under the command of the *comites* Procopius and Sebastianus. Having joined forces with Arsaces, King of Armenia, they were supposed to devastate Adiabene, Apollonia in Assyria, and, having passed through Corduen, to meet the main army on the banks of the Tigris, under the walls of Ctesiphon. Everything, to the last trifle, had been ardently foreseen, weighed, and pondered over by the Emperor. Those who grasped this military project were amazed at its wisdom, grandeur and simplicity.

In the very beginning of April they arrived at Circesium, the last Roman stronghold, erected by Diocletian on the frontier of Mesopotamia, at the juncture of the river Chaboras with the Euphrates. They laid down a pontoon bridge of barks. Julian issued the order to cross the boundary on the next morning.

Late in the evening, when everything was in readiness, he returned to his tent, tired and gay, lit a lamp, and was about to approach his favourite work, to which he daily apportioned a part of his nightly rest,—a voluminous philosophical treatise:—*Against the Christians and Against their Creed*.[44]—He wrote it by snatches, to the sounds of the military trumpets, camp songs, and the sentries calling to one another. Julian was gladdened by the thought that he was combating the Galilean with every means available,—on the field of battle, on the pages of a book, with Roman sword and with Hellenic wisdom. Never did he part with the works of the Holy Fathers, with church canons and the symbols [or creeds] of the Councils. On the margins of exceedingly old, tattered scrolls of the New Testament, which he studied with a zeal no less than that bestowed upon Plato and Homer, there were jotted caustic sneers in the hand of the Emperor.

The Emperor doffed his dusty accoutrements, laved, sat down at the little camp-table, and dipped a sharp-pointed reed into the ink-well, preparing to write. But his solitude was disturbed,—two messengers had arrived in the camp; one from Italy, the other from Jerusalem. Julian heard them both to the end.

Their tidings were not joyous: earthquake had just destroyed the magnificent city of Nicomedia, in Asia Minor; the subterranean shocks had thrown the popula-

tion of Constantinople into terror; the Sibylline Books forbade crossing the Roman frontier for the duration of a year.

The messenger from Jeruslaem had brought a missive from Alipius of Antioch, a dignitary to whom Julian had entrusted the reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon. Through a queer inconsistency, the worshipper of polytheistic Olympus had resolved to renew the temple, destroyed by the Romans, of the sole God of Israel, in order to controvert, before the face of all the nations and all the ages, the truth of the Evangelical prophecy: "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." [45] The Judæans responded with delight to the summons of Julian. Offerings poured in from everywhere. The project for the edifice was grandiose. The works were undertaken with expedition. The general supervision Julian had entrusted to his friend, the *comes* Alipius of Antioch, the former viceroy for Britannia.

"What happened?" asked the Emperor in alarm, looking from under his brows at the gloomy face of the messenger, and without breaking the seal of the missive.

"A great misfortune, blessed Augustus!"

"Speak. Have no fear."

"While the builders were clearing away the rubbish and carrying away the ancient ruins of the walls of the Temple of Solomon, all went well; but no sooner had they begun laying the foundation of the new building, than a flame, in the form of flying, fiery globes, burst forth out of the cellars, scattered the stones, and scorched the workmen. On the following day, at the order of the noble Alipius, they again fell to their labours. The miracle was repeated. And again, for a third time. The

Christians are exulting, the Hellenes are affrighted, and not a single workman will agree to go down into the subterrane. Of the structure there has not been left one stone upon another, that has not been thrown down."

"Thou liest, scoundrel! Thou thyself, probably, art a Galilean! . . ." exclaimed the Emperor, in fury, raising his arm in order to smite the genuant messenger. "These be silly wives' tales! Is it really possible that the *comes* Alipius could not choose a more sensible messenger?"

He hurriedly tore off the seal, unfolded the epistle, and read it. The messenger was right,—Alipius confirmed his words. Julian could not believe his eyes,—he attentively read the epistle over; he drew it nearer the lamp. Suddenly his face turned red. Biting his lips till the blood came, he crumpled up the papyrus and threw it to the physician Oribasius, standing alongside.

"Read that,—for thou dost not believe in miracles. Either the *comes* Alipius has gone out of his mind, or . . . Nay, this can not be! . . ."

The young Alexandrean scholar picked up and read the letter through with that calm, seemingly impartial, deliberation with which he did everything.

"There is no miracle whatsoever," uttered he, and turned his clear gaze upon Julian. "The savants have long ago described this phenomenon,—in the cellars of ancient buildings, closed and deprived of a current of air for the duration of many centuries, there occasionally collect dense, easily inflammable exhalations. It suffices but to descend into such a subterranean place with a burning torch to have an explosion take place; the sudden blaze kills the unwary. To ignorant people this

appears a miracle; but here, as everywhere, the light of knowledge scatters the darkness of superstition and liberates human reason.—Everything is splendidly beautiful, for that it is natural and in accordance with the will of nature."

He calmly laid the epistle down on the table, and upon his thin, obdurate lips there flitted a smile of self-satisfaction.

"Aye, aye,—of course," uttered Julian with a bitter smile, "for, naturally, one must have something to console one's self with! All is comprehensible, all is natural, —not only the earthquake in Nicomedia, but the earthquake in Constantinople, and the prophecies of the Sibylline books, and the drought in Antioch, and the fires at Rome, and the inundations in Ægypt. All is natural,—but 'tis odd that all should be against me,—not only earth, but the heavens, and water, and fire, and, 'twould seem, the very gods themselves! . . ."

Sallustius Secundus entered the tent.

"Great Augustus, the Etruscan soothsayers, whom thou hast commanded to have questioned anent the will of the gods, implore thee to tarry,—not to cross the frontier on the morrow; the prophetic hens of the haruspices, despite all prayers, turn away from food, sitting all ruffled up, and do not peck at the grains of barley,—an omen most ill!"

Julian contracted his eye-brows in wrath. But suddenly his eyes sparkled with merriment, and he burst into laughter so unexpected that all, in silence, with wonder, turned their eyes upon him:

"So that is how things stand! They peck not? Eh? What are we to do, then, with these silly fowl? Had we not better heed them, perhaps,—turn back to Antioch

to furnish joy and sport to the Galileans?—Dost know what, my friend?—hie thee back to these Etruscan soothsayers and declare to them my will; that all these sacred hens be thrown into the river; let them drink their fill at first; after that they shall e'en want to eat! . . ."

"Gracious Augustus,—have I understood thee aright?—is thy decision to cross the boundary to-morrow morning incontrovertible?"

"Aye!—And I swear by our future victories, I swear by the grandeur of our Empire,—no prophetic fowl whatsoever shall affright me,—nor water, nor fire, nor earth, nor sky, nor the gods! 'Tis too late. The lot is cast.—My friends, is there in all nature aught whatsoever more divine than the will of man? In all the Sibylline books is there aught whatsoever more potent than these four words: *I will it thus*?—More than ever before do I feel the mystery of my destiny. Hitherto portents did entangle me, like to nets, and did enslave me; now there is naught more for me to lose. Should the gods abandon me, then I, too, shall . . ."

He suddenly stopped short and fell silent with a strange smile. Then, when his attendants had withdrawn, he walked up to a little silvern statue of Mercury on a travelling altar, intending, according to his wont, to perform the evening prayer and to burn a few grains of incense; but suddenly turned away; still with the same strange smile, he walked away, lay down on the lion skin which served him for a bed, and, having extinguished the lamp, fell into that calm, fast sleep which occasionally descends upon men before great disasters.

The morning sun was scarcely breaking when he awoke, joyous. Throughout the camp was the noise of awakening; one heard the trumpets sounding.

Julian mounted his steed and dashed off for the bank of the Chaboras.

The early April morn was fresh and almost breathless. A slumbrous little breeze brought a night coolness from the great Asiatic river. Over all the broad spring flood of the Euphrates, from the towers of Circesium to the Roman camp, for a distance of ten stadia, stretched out rows of war galleys. Such a menacingly formidable fleet had not been seen since the times of Xerxes.

The sun spattered its first beams from behind the mausoleum-pyramid of the Cæsar Gordian,[46] the conqueror of the Persians, put to death on a time on this very shore by Philippus the Arabian. The rim of the sun burst into a ruddy glow over the calm desert, like an ember at white heat, and at once all the tips of the ships' masts turned rosy through the morning murk.

The Emperor gave the sign, and eight human masses, of five thousand each, moved off with a measured step from which the earth shook and reverberated. The Roman army began crossing the bridge,—across the boundary of Persia.

The steed carried Julian over to the opposite bank, upon a high sand dune,—the soil of his foes.

At the head of the Palatine Cohort rode the centurion of the shield-bearers, Anatolius, the admirer of Arsinoë. Anatolius glanced at the Emperor. A change had taken place in the appearance of Julian,—the month passed in the open air, in the toils of the camp, had proved beneficial to him; in the virile warrior, with tanned cheeks and a youthful glance sparkling with gaiety, it was difficult to recognize the scholastic philosopher with sunken, yellow face, with a scholarly moroseness in his eyes, his hair and beard dishevelled, an absent-minded precipita-

tion in his movements, and ink-stains on his fingers and on his cynic's toga,—the rhetorician Julian, whom the street urchins of Antioch mocked.

"Hearken, hearken,—the Cæsar is speaking."

Everything became quiet, save for the subdued clanking of armament, the wash of water about the ships, and the rustling of the silken standards.

"Most valiant of warriors!" Julian began, in a loud voice. "I behold upon your faces such valour and manhood that I cannot restrain myself from greeting you with joy. Remember, comrades,—the destinies of the universe are in our hands; we are re-establishing the ancient grandeur of the Roman Empire. Steel your hearts, then; be prepared for all things,—there is no turning back for us! I shall be in the van,—in your ranks,—mounted,—afoot,—participating in all toils and dangers, on an equal footing with the least of you, because from this day on ye are no longer mere soldiers, no longer slaves, but my friends, my children! Yet should perfidious destiny condemn me to fall in the struggle, I shall be happy in that I die for Rome, like to the great heroes, —the Scævolas, the Curtii, and the most illustrious scions of the Decii. Be ye valorous in spirit then, comrades, and remember: victory is to the strong!"

He took out of its scabbard and extended his sword, pointing out to the army the distant edge of the desert. The soldiers, having raised and joined their shields as one, cried out:

"Glory to Cæsar the Conqueror!"

The war galleys clove the waves of the river, the Roman eagles took flight over the cohorts, and the white steed bore off the Emperor toward the rising sun.

But a chill blue shadow from the pyramid of Gordian fell upon the aureate, smooth sand,—Julian would shortly ride his horse, out of the morning sun, into this long, ominous shadow of the lonely sepulchre.

XV

The army was marching along the left bank of the Euphrates.

The plain,—broad, smooth, like a sea,—was covered with silvery wormwood. Never a tree was to be seen. The bushes and the grasses had an aromatic odour. At rare intervals a herd of wild asses, raising up the dust, would appear at the edge of the sky. Ostriches ran past. The fat, delectable flesh of the field bustard smoked at supper upon the soldiers' fires. Jests and songs did not die away till the very night. The campaign seemed an excursion. With an ætherial lightness, almost without touching the earth, slender-limbed gazelles sped by; they had pensive, gentle eyes, like those of beautiful women. The warriors, seeking glory, loot, and blood, were met by the desert with a speechless caress, starry nights, soft glows at morn, and fragrant dusk, permeated with the scent of the bitter wormwood, at night.

They went on farther and farther, without finding their foes.

But, the instant they had passed, the quiet closed in again over the plain, as water over a ship that has sunk, and the stalks of the grasses, trampled down by the feet of the warriors, would gently rise again.

Suddenly the desert would grow menacing. Clouds covered the sky. Rain beat down. Lightning killed a soldier who was leading horses to be drenched.

Toward the end of April the hot days commenced.

Warriors envied those of their comrades who marched in the shade cast by a camel, or a loaded cart with a canvas covering. The men of the distant north, the Gauls and the Scythians, died from sun strokes. The plain was becoming mournful, bare, covered only here and there by tussocks of scorched grass. The feet sank in the sand.

Sudden whirlwinds would swoop down with such force that they tore off the standards, the tents; men and steeds were thrown off their feet. Then the dead quiet would fall again, which to a frightened soldier seemed more fearful than any storm. The jests and the songs died away. But the warriors marched ever farther and farther, without finding their foes.

In the beginning of May they entered the palm groves of Assyria.

Near Macepractum, where still stood the ruins of an enormous wall, built by the kings of ancient Assyria, they beheld the enemy for the first time. But the Persians retreated after a resistance unexpectedly slight.

Under a cloud of arrows the Romans crossed a deep canal, laid with Babylonian bricks, called the Nagar Malka,—the River of Kings,—which united the Tigris with the Euphrates, and cut all of Mesopotamia in two, with geometric regularity.

Suddenly the Persians disappeared. The level of the Nagar Malka began to rise; then, having overflowed its banks, the water poured forth in torrents upon the surrounding fields,—the Persians had contrived an inundation, having unlocked the weirs and dams of the canals, which irrigated in an intricate network the friable soil of the Assyrian fields.

The infantry walked in water up to their knees; their

feet stuck in the viscid clay; whole divisions fell through into invisible ditches and pits; even the horsemen and the laden camels vanished; it was necessary to sound every step of their way with poles. The fields were transformed into lakes; the palm groves into islands.

"Whither are we going?" murmured the pusillanimous. "With what end in view? What further hardships must we endure? Wherefore should we not forthwith return to the river, and board the ships? We be no frogs, to be swimming in puddles."

Julian went afoot, even in the most difficult places; with his own hands he helped to drag out heavy wains, stuck in the mud, and jested, showing the soldiers his imperial purple, sopping, bedraggled with dark-green slime.

Out of palm trunks they contrived fascine-ways; they threw floating bridges across upon inflated bladders.

With the coming of night they succeeded in clambering out upon a dry spot. The exhausted soldiers fell into a troubled sleep.

In the morning they beheld the stronghold of Perizabor. The Persians taunted their enemies from the height of their inaccessible towers and walls, hung with thick, shaggy coverings of goat-hides as protection from the blows of siege-machines. The exchange of projectiles and curses endured all day long.

In the darkness of the moonless night the Romans, preserving a profound silence, unshipped their catapults, and moved them up against the walls. The moats were filled up with earth.

By means of a single *malleolus*,—a fire-dart,—enormous, spindle-shaped, stuffed with a combustive compo-

sition of tar, sulphur, oil and elaterite they succeeded in setting on fire one of the hairy shields on the wall of the fortress.—The Persians dashed off to extinguish the conflagration. Taking advantage of the moment of confusion, the Emperor commanded a siege engine to be rolled forward,—a ram, consisting of the trunk of a pine, suspended upon iron chains from a pyramid of beams; this trunk terminated in a brazen ram's head. Hundreds of warriors, chanting "one, two, three," in unison, straining the muscles of their bare, swarthy shoulders, dragged upon thick ropes of tightly wound ox-sinews, and were slowly bringing the enormous pine into full swing.

There resounded the first stroke, like to a stroke of thunder; the earth began to reverberate, the walls shook,—then again, and again; the trunk swung more and more, the strokes rained down with constantly increasing frequency; the ram seemed to be growing infuriated and with obstinate malice pounded its brazen forehead against the wall. Suddenly there came a crash,—a whole corner of the wall had collapsed.

The Persians fled, shouting.

Julian, his helmet flashing through a cloud of dust, gay and awesome, like the god of war, dashed into the vanquished city.

The army marched on. For two days it rested in shady, fresh groves, enjoying the sour, cooling drink, on the style of wine—made of palm juice and aromatic Babylonian dates,—yellow and translucent, like amber.

Then they again came out upon the barren plain,—no longer of sand, however, but of stones; the sultriness was becoming constantly more oppressive; beasts

and men died; the air at noon-day quivered and streamed over the crags in wave-like, red-hot layers; over the grey, ashen desert the Tigris wound its way indolently, flashing with scaly silver, even as a snake that luxuriates in sun-baked sand.

Finally they beheld the enormous crag above the Tigris,—sheer, rose-coloured, barren, with jagged, spiky acuminations; this was the second stronghold, guarding Ctesiphon, the southern capital of Persia,—Maogamalki, still more inaccessible than Perizabor; a veritable eagles' eyrie, under the very clouds; the sixteen towers and the double wall of Maogamalki, like all the ancient Assyrian structures, which had no fear of the millenniads, were constructed of the famous Babylonian bricks, dried in the sun, cemented together with mineral-pitch.

The siege commenced. Again were heard the wearisome creaking of the wooden, ungainly parts of the ballistæ, the screeching of the wheels, levers, and blocks of the scorpions,[47] the whizzing of the fiery maleoli.

It was the hour when lizards sleep in the crevices of rocks; the rays of the sun beat down upon the backs and the heads of the soldiers like a crushing weight; the glitter of the sunlight was frightful; the warriors, in despair, paying no heed to their commanders, despite the danger snatched off their breast-plates and helmets, grown red-hot,—preferring wounds to the sunbake. Over dark-brown towers and embrasures of Maogamalki, whence poured down spears, envenomed arrows, stones, shots of lead and clay, blazing Persian falariques that poisoned the air with the vile stench of sulphur and naphtha, the dusty sky hung low, with a barely perceptible tinge of azure,—blinding, inexorable, horrible, like death. And the sky conquered, at last, the enmity of men,—the

besiegers and the besieged, languishing from fatigue, ceased battling.

There fell a silence, strange upon this bright noon-day, more lifeless than profoundest night.

The Romans were not cast low in spirit,—after the capture of Perizabor they had come to believe in the invincibility of Emperor Julian; they likened him to Alexander the Great and bided miracles.

For the duration of several days, toward the southern side of Maogamalki, where the crags descended at a lesser angle toward the plain, the soldiers dug a mine; passing under the walls of the stronghold, it terminated within the city; the width of the subterranean passage, of three ells, allowed of two warriors walking abreast; the thick wooden props, set at a certain distance from each other, held up the arched roof. The sappers worked cheerfully,—after the sun they found the subterranean dampness and darkness pleasant.

"We were frogs,—we have become moles," they jested.

Three cohorts,—the Mattiarii, the Laxinarii, the Victorii,—a thousand and five hundred of the most valiant warriors, preserving silence, entered the subterranean passage and impatiently awaited the command of their leaders to burst into the city.

At dawn the attack was purposely directed from two opposite directions, in order to distract the attention of the Persians.

Julian led the soldiers up a narrow, exceedingly steep path, under a hail of arrows and stones. "We shall see," he reflected, delighting in the danger, "if the gods will safeguard me, if there will be a miracle, if I shall now escape death!"

An unrestrainable curiosity, a thirsting after the supernatural, impelled him to expose his life to danger, —with a provocative smile to tempt fate; nor was it death he feared, but the losing of this gaming with fate.

The soldiers followed him, as though under a spell, infected by his madness.

The Persians, mocking at the efforts of the besiegers, and chanting praise to the Son of the Sun, King Sapor, shouted to the Romans from the cloud-capped strongholds of the Maogamalki:

"Julian will sooner penetrate to the chambers of Ormuzd than within our fortress!"

In the heat of the attack the Emperor in a whisper transmitted his command to the leaders.

The soldiers secreted in the mine made their exit within the city, in the cellar of a certain house where an old Persian woman, a baker, was kneading dough. She screamed out piercingly upon catching sight of the Roman legionaries. They slew her.

Stealing up unperceived, they threw themselves upon the besieged from the rear. The Persians cast down their arms and scattered over the streets of Maogamalki. The Romans opened the gates from within, and the city was seized from two directions.

Now none doubted any longer that Julian, like to Alexander the Great, would vanquish the whole Persian Empire, as far as Indus itself.

The army was drawing nigh the southern capital of Persia, Ctesiphon. The ships remained on the Euphrates. Still with the same feverish, almost magical rapidity, which did not give the enemy time to recover, Julian rebuilt an ancient Roman structure,—a canal, originally

excavated by Trajan and Septimius Severus, but now filled up, as a precaution, by the Persians. Through this canal the fleet was brought over from the Euphrates into the Tigris, a little above the gates of Ctesiphon. The conqueror had penetrated within the very heart of the Asiatic monarchy.

On the evening of the following day, Julian, having convened a council of war, announced that he would, in the night, transport his forces to yonder shore, to the very walls of Ctesiphon. Dagalaiph, Gormizda, Secundinus, Victor, Sallustius,—skilled commanders all,—were horrified and for a long space opposed the Emperor, imploring him to relinquish this too daring enterprise; they pointed out the fatigue of the army, the breadth of the river, the rapidity of its current, the steepness of the opposite shore, the proximity of Ctesiphon, and the incomputable forces of King Sapor, as well as the inevitability of a sortie by the Persians during the crossing. Julian turned a deaf ear to everything.

"No matter how long we wait," he exclaimed finally, with impatience, "the river will not become less broad, nor the shores less steep; whereas the host of the Persians with every day increaseth through fresh reinforcements. Had I heeded your counsels, we would be sitting in Antioch e'en now!"

The commanders came out of his quarters in confusion.

"He will not hold out!" with a sigh uttered the skilled and crafty Dagalaiph, a barbarian grown grey in the service of Rome; "mark my words,—he will not hold out! Merry he may be, but still there is something amiss in his face. Such an expression I have witnessed in men near to despair, fatigued unto death. . . ."

Foggy, sultry twilight was falling upon the smooth expanse of the great river. The signal was given; five war galleys with four hundred warriors left the shore; for long one could hear the swing of oars; then everything grew quiet; the murk became impenetrable. Julian was gazing intently from the shore. He was concealing his agitation under a smile. The commanders were exchanging whispers. Suddenly a light gleamed in the darkness. All held their breath and turned their eyes upon the Emperor. He comprehended the significance of this light. The Persians had succeeded in setting fire to the Roman ships with fire missiles, dextrously let down from the steep shore.

He blanched, but immediately recovered, and, without giving the soldiers time to reflect, dashed upon the first ship he came to, standing near the very shore, and cried out loudly, turning to the troops with a triumphant air:

"Victory! Victory! Behold the light! They have beached, they have taken possession of the shore. I have ordered the cohort I despatched to light bonfires as a signal of victory. After me, comrades!"

"What art thou doing?" the cautious Sallustius whispered in his ear. "We are lost,—why, 'tis a conflagration! . . ."

"The Cæsar has gone out of his mind!" Gormizda spoke in horror into the ear of Dagalaiph.

The crafty barbarian was shrugging his shoulders in perplexity.

The army was unrestrainably rushing towards the river. With a triumphant cry of "Victory! Victory!", jostling one another and striving to be first, tumbling into the water and crawling out with gay curses, they all scrambled on the ship. A few small barques were

almost swamped. There was not sufficient room on the galleys.

Many horsemen threw themselves in to cross by swimming, the breasts of their steeds cleaving the rapid current. The Celts and the Batavians, upon their enormous shields of leather, concave after the fashion of tiny coracles, precipitated themselves into the dark river; fearless, they floated in the fog, and their shields swirled rapidly in the whirlpools; but, heeding not the danger, the soldiers were joyously shouting: "Victory! Victory!"

The force of the current was tamed by the ships, which dammed up the river. The conflagration upon the five galleys in the van was extinguished without difficulty.

Only then did they comprehend the valorous, almost mad guile of the Emperor. But the soldiers waxed still merrier,—now, when a danger such as this had been surmounted in jest, all things seemed possible.

Shortly before daybreak the Romans took possession of the heights on the opposite shore. Barely had they managed to refresh themselves with a short sleep, without taking off their armament, when at dawn they beheld the enormous army which had sallied out of the walls of Ctesiphon upon the plain before the city.

The battle raged twelve hours. The Persians fought with fury. The army of Julian for the first time beheld the enormous war elephants, which were capable of trampling down a whole cohort as if it were a field with ears of grain.

The victory was such as the Romans had not sustained since the times of the great Emperors,—Trajan, Vespasianus, Titus.

Julian, at the rising of the sun, brought a sacrificial

offering of thanks to the god of war, Aries, which offering consisted of ten white bulls of perfect beauty, recalling the sacred bullocks depicted upon ancient Hellenic marbles. All were merry. The Etruscan augurs alone, as ever, preserved an obstinate and ominous moroseness; with every victory of Julian they became more sombre, more taciturn.—The first bull was led up to the flaming, laurel-entwined altar. The bull shambled languidly and submissively,—suddenly he staggered back, fell on his knees with a piteous lowing, resembling a human voice, which sent a chill through every one; he stuck his nose in the dust, and, before the two-edged axe of the *victimarius* touched his broad forehead, began to quiver, expiring. Another was led up. He also fell down dead. Then a third, and a fourth. They all shambled up to the sacrificial altar, languid, weak, barely keeping their legs, as though stricken with a deadly disease,—and, with a dismal lowing, expired. A murmur of horror was heard among the troops. This was a fearful portent.

Some asserted that, apparently, the Etruscan priests had purposely poisoned the sacrificial bulls, in order to avenge themselves upon the Emperor for his contempt toward their prophecies.

Nine bulls fell. The tenth tore himself loose, rending his trammels, and dashed off, bellowing, spreading confusion throughout the camp. He ran out of the gates, and they were not able to recapture him.

The sacrificial offering was terminated. The augurs were maliciously exulting.

But when they strove to dissect the dead bulls, Julian, with the skilled eye of a prognosticator beheld in their entrails indubitable and horrifying portents. He turned

away. He wanted to smile, and could not. His face became covered with pallor. Suddenly he walked up to the flaming altar and with all his might pushed it with his foot. The sacrificial altar swayed, but did not fall. The throng heaved a profound sigh, as one man. The prefect Sallustius darted toward the Emperor and whispered in his ear:

"The soldiers are watching. . . . 'Tis best to terminate the divine service. . . ."

Julian thrust him aside, and still more forcefully, struck the altar with his foot; the altar was overturned; the embers scattered; the fire went out, but the aromatic smoke began to swirl up still more copiously.

"Woe! woe! The sacrificial altar is being desecrated!" resounded a voice in the throng.

"I tell thee, he has gone off his mind!" babbled Gormizda in horror, seizing Dagalaiph by the arm.

The Etruscan augurs remained immovable, as quiet, as pompous as before, with dispassionate faces, which were as though of stone.

Julian raised his arms up to heaven and exclaimed in a loud voice:

"I swear by the eternal joy, imprisoned here in my heart,—I abjure ye, even as ye have abjured me; I forsake ye, even as ye have forsaken me,—ye blessed ones, ye impotent ones! I stand alone against ye, ye Olympian phantoms! . . ."

A bowed augur of ninety years, with a long white beard, with a bent priestly staff, walked up to the Emperor, and laid a hand, still firm, still strong, upon his shoulder.

"Softer, my child,—softer! If thou hast attained to the mystery,—rejoice in silence. Tempt not the horde.

Thou art heard by those who are not meant to hear. . . ."

The murmur of indignation was growing stronger.

"He is ill," Gormizda was whispering to Dagalaiph. "He should be taken to his tent. Or else this may have an evil ending. . . ."

Oribasius the physician walked up to Julian, with his usual solicitous air, carefully took him by the arm, and fell to persuading him:

"Thou needest repose, most gracious Augustus. Thou hast not slept for two nights. There are dangerous fevers in these regions. Let us go to the tent,—the sun is harmful. . . ."

The confusion in the troops was becoming dangerous. The murmuring and outcries blended into an indignant, indistinct rumbling. None understood anything clearly, but all sensed that something untoward was taking place. Some were crying out in a superstitious horror:

"Sacrilege! Sacrilege! Raise up the sacrificial altar! What are the priests gaping at?"

Others answered them:

"The priests have poisoned the Cæsar, for that he would not heed their counsels. Slay the priests! They will bring about our ruin! . . ."

The Galileans, taking advantage of a propitious occasion, darted about, bustling with the meekest air, laughing and whispering to each other, inventing slanders, and, like snakes awakened after their winter sleep, just warmed up by the sun, were hissing:

"Why, do ye not perceive? 'Tis God punishing him. 'Tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.—The fiends have possessed him, the fiends have

clouded his reason,—and so he has risen up against those same gods for whose sake he has abjured the Sole One."

The Emperor, as though awakening from a sleep, let his gaze rove slowly over all, and finally asked Oribasius in abstraction:

"What is it? What are they shouting about? . . . Aye, aye,—the overturned sacrificial altar. . . ."

With a sad smile he glanced upon the embers of incense, expiring in the dust:

"Dost thou know, my friend,—there is naught one can offend men more with than the truth. Poor, silly babes! —Well, what of it,—let them shout a bit, weep a bit,—they shall grow consoled. . . . Let us go, Oribasius; let us go speedily into the shade. Thou art right,—the sun must be harmful for me. It makes my eyes ache. I am fatigued. . . ."

He went on slowly, leaning upon the arm of the physician. Entering his pavilion, with an indolent motion of his hand he commanded all to withdraw. They locked the door. It became dark in the tent. He walked up to his poor and hard camp bed,—the lion's skin,—and fell down upon it in exhaustion. For long he lay thus, face down, squeezing his head with his palms, as he had done during childhood, after a heavy hurt or grief.

"Quiet, quiet,—the Cæsar is ill," the leaders strove to calm the soldiers.

And the soldiers became silent and froze on the spot.

In the camp, as in a sick-room, there fell a silence, fraught with expectation.

The Galileans alone lost no time in expectation,—they bustled about, gliding without a sound, penetrating everywhere, spreading gloomy rumours, and hissing like

snakes awakened after their winter sleep, just warmed up by the sun.

"Why, as yet not perceive? 'Tis God punishing him.—'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God."

XVI

Oribasius cautiously looked into the tent several times, offering the sick man a refreshing draught. Julian refused, and begged to be left in peace. He feared human faces, and sounds, and light. As before, having shut his eyes, squeezing his head with his hands, he strove to think of naught, to forget where he was and what was transpiring with him.

That unnatural exertion of his will, in which he had passed the last three months, had changed him, leaving him weak and broken, as after a long illness.

He knew not whether he was sleeping or keeping vigil. Images, repeating, dragging one after another, swam before his eyes with unrestrainable rapidity and excruciating vividness.

Now it seemed to him that he was lying in the chill, enormous sleeping chamber at Macellum; the decrepit nurse Labda had made the sign of the cross over him for the night,—and the snorting of the war-steeds, tethered in the vicinity of the tent, became the laughable, abrupt snoring of the old pedagogue Mardonius; with joy Julian felt himself an exceedingly small boy, unknown to any one, distant from all men, abandoned in the mountains of Cappadocia.

Now there appeared to him in a vision the familiar, exquisite and fresh fragrance of hyacinths, tenderly warmed by the March sun, in the snug little court of the priest Olympiodorus; the endearing laughter of

Amaryllis, attuned to the murmuring of the fountain; the sound of the little brazen cups in the game of kottabos; and the summoning call to dinner of Diophana from her kitchen: "My children, the ginger cakes are ready!"

But everything would evanish.

And all he heard was spring buzzing of the first flies of January, already rejoicing at the mid-day blaze, in a coign sheltered from the wind, upon a white, sunny wall near the sea; light green waves, devoid of foam, are dying away at his feet; with a smile he watches the sail, absorbed in the infinite tenderness of the Sea and the wintry sun; he knows that in this blessed solitude he is alone, that none will come, and, like those black, joyous flies upon that white wall, he feels but the innocent joy of life, the sun, and the quietude.

Suddenly, coming to his senses, Julian recalls that he is in the heart of Persia; that he is the Roman Emperor; that in his hands were sixty thousand soldiers; that there were no gods; that he had overturned the sacrificial altar, in sacrilege. He shudders; an ague would run through his body; it seemed to him that he had lost his footing, that he was falling into an abyss, and that there was nothing to clutch at.

He could not have said whether he had lain in this half-doze an hour or a whole day.

But distinctly, now no longer in a dream but in reality, there was heard the voice of his old faithful servitor, who had cautiously put in his head at the door:

"Cæsar! I fear to disturb thee, but I dare not disobey. Thou hast commanded to be informed without delay. There has just arrived in camp the commander Arintheus. . . ."

"Arintheus!" exclaimed Julian and jumped up on his feet, aroused as though by a peal of thunder. "Arintheus! Summon him,—summon him hither!"

Arintheus was one of his bravest commanders, despatched with a small detachment of scouts to the north, in order to find if there were approaching the auxiliary army, thirty thousand strong, of the comites Procopius and Sebastianus, who had been commanded to join the Emperor under the walls of Ctesiphon, with the troops of the ally of Rome, Arsaces, King of Armenia.

"Bring him!" exclaimed the Emperor. "Bring him! Quick! Or no. . . . I myself. . . ."

But his weakness had not yet passed, despite his momentary animation; his head began to swim; he closed his eyes and had to lean against the canvas side wall of the pavilion.

"Give me wine, strong wine. . . . With cold water."

His old servant busied himself, dextrously filled up a goblet, and handed it to the Emperor. The latter drained it with slow gulps, to the last drop, and sighed with relief. Then he walked out of the tent.

It was late in the evening. Far off, beyond the Euphrates, a thunderstorm had passed. The tempestuous wind brought a fresh dampness,—the odour of the rain. Among the black clouds great stars, here and there, quivered strongly, like the flames of lampads in a gusty wind. From the desert came the yapping of jackals. Julian bared his breast, put his face up to the wind, and with enjoyment felt the virile caress of the departing storm on his hair.

He smiled, recalling his pusillanimity; his weakness was disappearing. He felt the return of a pleasurable tension of spiritual forces, like to intoxication. He

wanted to issue commands, to be active, to pass the night without sleeping, to go into combat, to play with life and death, vanquishing danger. Only at rare intervals a slight ague ran through his bodv.

Arintheus came.

The tidings were lamentable,—there was no more hope for the assistance of Procopius and Sebastianus; the Emperor had been abandoned by his allies in the unknown heart of Asia. There were disquieting rumours afloat about the treachery, the betrayal, of the crafty Arsaces.

At this juncture the Emperor was informed of the arrival of a Persian deserter from the camp of Sapor.

The Persian was brought. He fell prostrate before Julian and kissed the ground. This was a monster,—his shaven head, with ears cut off, with nostrils torn out, recalled a death's head; but the eyes shone with intellect and resolution. He was in a costly garment of fiery Sogdianian silk, and spoke a broken Greek; two slaves accompanied him.

The Persian, having given his name as Artaban, said that he was a satrap, slandered before Sapor, made hideous by torture; and that he had fled to the Romans, in order to revenge himself upon the king.

"O Sovereign of the Universe!" spake Artaban, floridly and flatteringly. "I shall give Sapor over to thee, bound hand and foot, like a sheep brought to the sacrifice. I shall bring thee in the night to the camp, and thou shalt softly, most softly, cover the king with thy hand; thou shalt take him, even as little children take fledglings into the palms of their hands. Do thou but heed Artaban; Artaban can do all things; Artaban knoweth the secrets of the king. . . ."

"What wouldst thou have of me?" asked Julian.

"A great vengeance. Come thou with me!"

"Whither?"

"To the north, through the desert,—three hundred and twenty-five parasangs; then, through the mountains, to the east, straight to Susa and Agbatana."

The Persian was pointing to the horizon.

"Thither, thither!" he kept on repeating, without taking his eyes off Julian.

"Cæsar," whispered Gormizda in the ear of the Emperor, "beware. This man hath the evil eye. He is a wizard, a knave, or—though it must not be said toward nightfall,—something still worse. At times in these regions evil things be abroad of nights, working ill. . . . Drive him from thee; listen not to him. . . ."

The Emperor paid no attention to the words of Gormizda. He felt the strange fascination of the imploring, intent eyes of the Persian.

"Dost thou know exactly the road to Agbatana?"

"O, aye, aye, aye!" the latter fell to lisping, laughing rapturously. "I know,—how should I not know! Every little blade of grass on the plain, every well.—Artaban knoweth the meaning of the song of the birds, he heareth the feather-grass growing, the underground well-springs flowing. The ancient Zarathustrian wisdom is in the heart of Artaban. He shall start running, start running before thy army, sniffing the scent, pointing the way.—Believe me, within twenty days all Persia shall be in thy hands,—to very Indus, unto sultry Oceanus! . . ."

The heart of the Emperor was pounding hard.

"Can it be," he was reflecting, "that this is that very miracle, and no other, which I have been awaiting? Within twenty days Persia shall be in my hands! . . ."

He could not catch his breath for joy.

"Drive me not from thee," whispered the monster; "I shall lie like a dog at thy feet. The moment I beheld thy face, I came to love thee,—to love thee, thou Sovereign of the Universe, more than my very soul, for that thou art splendidly beautiful! I long to have thee walk upon my body and trample me with thy feet, and I shall lick the dust of thy feet, and chant,—Glory, glory, glory to the Son of the Sun, the King of the East and of the West,—Julian!"

He was kissing his feet; both his slaves had also fallen with their faces to the ground, repeating "Glory, glory, glory!"

"But how dispose of the ships?" said Julian meditatively, as though he were speaking to himself. "To abandon them without troops as plunder for the enemy, or to remain in close contact with them? . . ."

"Burn them!" whispered Artaban.

Julian shuddered and looked searchingly into his face.

"Burn them? What art thou saying? . . ."

Artaban raised up his head and his eyes bored into the eyes of the Emperor:

"Thou art afraid,—thou? Nay, nay,—mortals fear, but not the gods! Burn them, and thou shalt be free as the wind,—the ships shall not fall into the hands of the enemy, while thy army shall be increased by the soldiers attached to the fleet. Be thou great and fearless unto the very end! Burn them,—and within ten days thou art at the walls of Agbatana; within twenty Persia is in thy hands! Thou shalt be greater than the son of Philip, the conqueror of Darius! Do thou but burn the ships and follow me!—Or dost thou not dare?"

"But what if thou liest? What if I read in thy heart

that thou liest?" exclaimed the Emperor, with one hand seizing the Persian by the throat, with the other raising a short sword over him. Gormizda heaved a sigh of relief.

For several moments they gazed in silence into each other's eyes. Artaban withstood the gaze of the Emperor. Julian felt himself once more vanquished by the fascination of these eyes,—intelligent, audacious and resigned.

"Let me die, let me die by thy hand, if thou believest not!" the Persian was reiterating.

Julian restored his sword to its scabbard.

" 'Tis a fearful thing and a delectable to gaze into thy orbs," continued Artaban. "Behold thy face, like to the face of a god! No one knows this as yet. I, I alone know who thou art. . . . Reject not thy slave, thou Lord! . . ."

"We shall see," uttered Julian, meditatively. "For I myself have long been wanting to pass into the heart of the desert, to seek battle with the King. But the ships? . . ."

"O, ay,—the ships!" Artaban came to with a start. "We must set out as soon as possible, this very night, before daybreak, while 'tis yet dark, so that thy enemies from Ctesiphon may not see. . . . Wilt thou burn them?"

Julian made no answer.

"Lead him away, and take not your eyes off him," commanded the Emperor, pointing the deserter out to the warriors.

Returning to his tent, Julian for a moment paused at the door and lifted up his eyes:

"Can it really be? . . . So simply, so soon? My will

is as the will of the gods; I no sooner conceive the thought, than 'tis being fulfilled. . . ."

The gaiety in his soul grew and mounted, like a storm. With a smile he laid his hand against his heart,—so strongly was it pounding. A chill was still running over his back, and his head ached slightly, as though he had passed the whole day in a too-bright sun.

Having summoned to his pavilion the commander Victor, an old man blindly devoted to him, he entrusted to him the golden ring with the Imperial seal.

"To the commanders of the fleet, the comites Constantine and Lucillian," commanded Julian. "Before dawn they are to burn the ships, save five large ones with the grain, and twelve small ones for pontoon bridges. The small ones to be taken up on the carts. The remaining ones are to be burned. Whoever will oppose this shall answer with his head. All this to be kept in secrecy.—Go!"

He gave him a scrap of parchment, after rapidly writing a few words upon it,—a laconic order to the chief commanders of the fleet.

Victor, according to his wont, amazed at nothing and raising no objection, in silence, with an air of dispassionate obedience, kissed the hem of the Emperor's raiment and went off to carry out the behest.

Julian convened a council of war, despite the late hour. The military leaders gathered in the pavilion,—sombre, secretly irritated, and suspicious. In a few brief words he imparted to them his plan,—to march north, into the heart of Persia, in the direction of Agbatana and Susa, in order to fall upon the King unawares.

They all rose up in protest, began speaking all at the same time, with almost no concealment of their

opinion that the project seemed to them a mad one. Upon the austere faces of the old, intelligent leaders, inured to dangers, there was an expression of fatigue, of annoyance, of mistrust. Many objected curtly.

"Whither are we going? Wherefore?" Sallustius Secundus was saying. "Reflect, gracious Cæsar,—we have conquered half Persia; Sapor offers to thee terms of peace such as the Kings of Asia had never yet offered to any one of the Roman conquerors,—neither to Pompeius the Great, nor to Septimius Severus, nor to Trajan. Let us, then, conclude a glorious peace, while it be not yet too late, and return to our fatherland. . . ."

"The soldiers grumble," remarked Dagalaiph; "bring them not to despair. They have grown weary. There be many wounded, many ill. Shouldst thou lead them farther into the unknown desert, we can answer for naught.—Have pity! Besides, 'tis time for thee to take a rest thyself,—thou hast wearied possibly more than any of us. . . ."

"Let us turn back," they all concluded. "To go on farther is madness!"

At this moment there was heard a muffled, ominous rumbling beyond the wall of the tent, like to the surging of a distant surf. Julian hearkened closely, and immediately comprehended that this was an uprising.

"Ye know our will," he uttered coldly, indicating the egress to the commanders; " 'tis unalterable. Within two hours we are setting out. See that everything be in readiness."

"Blessed Augustus," uttered Sallustius calmly and respectfully, but in a voice that slightly shook, "I shall not depart without having said to thee that which I must say. Thou hast spoken to us, thy equals not in might but

in valour, not like a disciple of Socrates and Plato. We can excuse thy words only by thy momentary irritation, which darkens thy divine reason. . . ."

"Well, what of it?" exclaimed Julian, smiling mockingly and blanching from suppressed anger; " 'tis all the worse for you, my friends; it means that ye are all in the hands of a madman! I have but now ordered the ships to be burned,—and my mandate is being carried out. I foresaw your prudence, and have cut off the last means of retreat. Aye, now your life is in my hands, and I shall compel ye to believe in a miracle! . . ."

They were all dumbfounded; Sallustius alone darted to Julian and seized him by the arm.

"This shall not be, Cæsar,—thou couldst not! . . . Or is it really so? . . ."

He did not finish, and released the Emperor's arm. All present jumped up, listening intently.

The cries of the warriors were becoming constantly louder and louder outside the canvas of the tent; their mutinous rumbling was nearing, as though a tempest were sweeping over tree-tops.

"Let them shout a bit," uttered Julian calmly. "Poor, silly babes! Whither would they want to go away from me? Do ye hear? That is why I have burned the ships,—the hope of the cowards, the refuge of the lazy. Now there is no longer any turning back for us. Now ye are bound with me for life and for death. Within twenty days Asia is in my hands! I have surrounded ye with horror and ruin that ye may conquer all things and become like unto me. Rejoice! I shall lead ye, like the god Dionysos, over all the world,—ye shall conquer men and gods, and shall, your own selves, be even as the gods! . . ."

He had barely uttered the last words, when from the whole army arose a cry of horror:

"They are burning! They are burning!"

The commanders dashed out of the tent,—with Julian after them. They beheld the glow of the conflagration. Victor had carried out with exactitude the will of the potentate. The fleet was enveloped in flames. The Emperor admired the mass of flame with a soft and strange smile.

"Cæsar! May the gods have mercy upon us,—he hath escaped! . . ."

With these words one of the centurions cast himself at the feet of the Emperor, pale and trembling.

"Escaped? Who? What art thou saying? . . ."

"Artaban,—Artaban! Woe is us! . . . He hath tricked thee, Cæsar! . . ."

"It can not be! . . . But what of his servants?" the Emperor babbled, barely audibly.

"But now, when tortured, they confessed that Artaban is no satrap, but a collector of taxes in Ctesiphon," continued the centurion. "He had conceived this ruse to save the city and to betray thee into the hands of the Persians, after enticing thee into the desert; he knew that thou wouldst burn the ships. And they have also said that Sapor is marching here with a countless army. . . ."

The Emperor rushed to the bank of the river, to meet the commander Victor.

"Put it out, put it out, put it out! Quickly! . . ."

But his voice died away, and, having glanced at the blazing fleet, he understood that no human powers could any longer stop the fire, fanned by a strong wind.

In horror he clutched his head, and, although there

was no more either of hope or prayer in his heart, he lifted his eyes up to heaven, as though he still sought something in it. But only the wan stars flickered there through the glow of the conflagration.

The troops, with an ever-increasing menace, grew more and more turbulent and noisy.

"The Persians have set the fleet afire!" vociferated some, stretching out their arms toward the blazing ships, —their last hope.

"Not the Persians, but the commanders themselves, in order to entice us into the desert and abandon us!" others waxed insane.

"Slay, slay the priests!" a third group repeated. "The priests have made the Cæsar drunk and have deprived him of reason!"

"Glory to Julian the Conqueror!" exclaimed the faithful Gauls and Celts. "Be still, ye traitors! While he liveth we have naught to fear!"

The faint-hearted were weeping:

"Let us to our native land,—let us to our native land! We do not want to go on farther, we do not want to go into the desert. We will not make one step farther; we shall fall down on the way. 'Twere better to slay us!"

"Not for us to see our native land, no more than our ears! We be lost, we have fallen into the gin of the Persians!"

"Why, now, do ye not perceive?" exulted the Galileans. "The fiends have possessed him! The impious Julian hath sold his soul to them, and they are drawing him on to his ruin. Whither can we be led by this madman, possessed of fiends? . . ."

But in the meanwhile the Cæsar, seeing naught and

hearing naught, as in a delirium, was whispering to himself with a wan, wandering and abstracted smile:

" 'Tis all one,—'tis all one. . . . The miracle will be consummated! If not now, then later.—I believe in the miracle! . . ."

XVII

It was the first bivouac of the retreat, on the night of the sixteenth day since the Kalends of June.

The army had refused to go on farther. Neither supplications, nor persuasions, nor the threats of the Emperor had helped. The Celts, the Scythians, the Romans, the pagans and the Christians, the brave and the cowardly,—all had replied with a single cry: "Back, back!"

The military leaders were in secret maliciously rejoicing; the Etruscan augurs were openly exulting. After the burning of the ships all had mutinied. Now not only the Galileans, but the worshippers of the Olympians as well, were certain that a curse was hanging heavy over the head of the Emperor, that the Eumenides were pursuing him. Whenever he passed through the camp, all talk would lapse,—all sidled away from him in fear.

The Sibylline Books and the Apocalypsis, the Etruscan augurs and the Christian sharp-eyed knaves, the gods and the angels, had all joined forces to bring about the ruin of the Apostate.

Thereupon the Emperor proclaimed that he would lead them to their native land through the province of Corduen, in the direction of the fertile Apollonia in Assyria. In such a retreat there still remained, at the least, the hope of joining forces with the troops of Procopius and Sebastianus. Julian consoled himself with the thought that he still was not leaving the boundaries of Persia, and, consequently, might meet with the main

forces of King Sapor, and sustain such a victory as would mend all.

The Persians appeared no more. Desiring, before the decisive attack, to exhaust the Roman army, they set fire to the rich fields with yellowing barley and wheat, as well as to all granaries and hay-ricks in their hamlets.

The soldiers marched on over the dead desert, smoking from the recent conflagration. Famine set in.

In order to increase the hardship of their enemies, the Persians had destroyed the dams of the canals and inundated the burned fields. They were helped by the torrents and streams which overflowed their banks in consequence of the short but mighty summer thawing of snows upon the mountain summits of Armenia.

The water quickly dried up under the sultry sun of June. Upon the earth, not yet cooled after the conflagration, remained puddles with tepid and viscid mire. Of evenings the wet embers would give off stifling exhalations, the sweetish odour of rotting burnt matter,—an odour which saturated everything,—the air, the water, even the clothing and the food of the soldiers. From the decomposing swamps arose clouds of insects,—mosquitoes, venomous burrel-flies, gnats and flies. They hovered over the pack animals, they clung to the dusty, sweating skin of the legionaries. Day and night one heard their soporific buzzing. The horses went mad, the oxen tore themselves from beneath their yokes and overturned the wains. After a difficult march the soldiers were not able to rest,—there was no salvation from the insects even in tents,—they penetrated through cracks; it was necessary to wrap one's self in a stifling blanket, head and all, in order to fall asleep. From the bite of certain minute, transparent flies of the dirty yellow col-

our of manure, there arose swellings and blisters, which at first itched, then ached, and, finally, turned into fearful, rotting sores.

Latterly the sun did not come out. The sky was covered with an even shroud of white, sultry clouds; but to the eyes their motionless light was still more exhausting than the sun; the sky seemed low, solid, stifling, like the low-hung ceiling of a hot bath.

Thus marched they,—emaciated, weak, with languid step, their heads cast down, between a sky mercilessly low, as white as lime, and the earth, charred and black.

It seemed to them that Antichrist himself, a man rejected of God, had purposely led them into this accursed place, in order to bring about their perdition. Some murmured, upbraiding their leaders, but incoherently, as though in a delirium. Others were softly praying and weeping, like sick children, imploring their comrades for a bit of bread, for a swallow of wine. Others fell down on the way from weakness.

The Emperor ordered to be distributed to the starving the last food supplies, which were being saved for him and those about his person. He himself was contented with a thin porridge of flour and a small bit of fat,—such fare as the least fastidious of soldiers would have turned away from.

Thanks to his extreme moderation, he was in a constant state of exaltation, and, at the same time, felt a strange buoyancy of body, as though he were endowed with wings,—this buoyancy sustained his powers and multiplied them tenfold. He strove not to think of that which was to come. To return to Antioch or Taurus conquered, to the opprobrium and taunts of the Gali-

leans,—the mere thought of this seemed to him unendurable.

One night the soldiers were resting. A north wind had dispersed the insects. The oil, flour and wine, given out from the last supplies of the Emperor, had appeased their hunger to a slight extent. Hope of return was awakening.

Julian withdrew into his tent.

Of late he slept as little as possible, finding forgetfulness only toward morning in a light doze; but, whenever he fell asleep altogether, he would awaken with horror in his soul, with a chill sweat on his body,—he needed all the might of consciousness in order to suppress this horror.

Having entered his pavilion, with a pair of iron snuffers he took off the thief from the wick of the brazen lampad suspended in the centre of the tent. All around were scattered parchment scrolls from his travelling library,—among them the Evangel. He prepared to write,—this was his favourite night labour; the philosophical work *Against the Galileans,*[48] begun two and a half months ago, upon setting out on this expedition.

He was reading the manuscript over, sitting with his back toward the door of the tent, when suddenly he heard a rustling. He turned around, cried out, and sprang to his feet,—it seemed to him that he beheld a spectre. In the doorway stood a youth in a dark, poor tunic of camel's hair, with a dusty sheep-skin—the charitable gift of some Ægyptian anchorites—thrown over one shoulder, with bare, delicate feet in palm sandals.

The Emperor looked and waited, unable to utter a single word. There reigned that silence which occurs only at the deadest hour, after midnight.

"Dost remember," uttered a familiar voice, "dost re-

member, Julian, how thou didst come to me in the convent? Then I did repulse thee, but could not forget thee, inasmuch as thou and I are forever near to each other. . . ."

The youth threw back the dark monastic covering from his head,—Julian beheld the golden curls and recognised Arsinoë.

"Whence comest thou? How hast thou come here? Wherefore art thou clad thus? . . ."

He still feared that this was, perchance, a spectre, that she might vanish as suddenly as she had appeared.

Arsinoë told him in a few words what had transpired with her during their first separation.—Having forsaken her guardian, Hortensius, and distributed almost all her estate to the poor, she had lived for a long space among the Galilean anchorites, to the south of the Lake Mareotis, among the sterile Libyan mountains, in the fearful deserts near Nitria and in the land of the Saketæ. She had been accompanied by the youth Juventinus, the disciple of the blind ancient Didimus. They had made pilgrimages to the great ascetics.

"And what was the result?" asked Julian, not without a secret apprehension. "What was the result, maiden? Didst thou find with them that which thou wast seeking? . . ."

She shook her head, and spake with sadness:

"Nay. Merely gleams, merely hints and portents. . . ."

"Tell me,—tell me all!" the Emperor urged her feverishly, and his eyes lit up with hope.

"Shall I be able to tell?" she began slowly. "Seest thou, my friend,—I was seeking freedom with them, but even there it exists not. . . ."

"Aye, aye. Is that not the truth?" Julian was exulting more and more. "For that was what I told thee, Arsinoë. Dost thou remember? . . ."

She sank down on a camp chair, covered with a leopard skin, and went on calmly, with her former pensive smile. He caught every word of hers with delight and avidity. . . .

. . . . . .

"Tell me, how didst thou come to leave these miserable ones?" asked Julian.

"I, too, have had a temptation," answered she. "Once, in a desert, among the stones, I found a splinter of white, pure marble; I picked it up, and for long admired its sparkle in the sun,—and suddenly recalled Athens, my youth, art, thyself, as though I had come out of a sleep, —and right then and there decided to return into the world, in order to live and die as God had created me,— an artist. At this time the ancient Didimus had a prophetic dream,—that I had apparently reconciled thee with the Galilean. . . ."

"With the Galilean?" quietly repeated Julian,—and his face immediately darkened, his eyes were extinguished, the laughter died away on his lips.

"I wanted to see thee," went on Arsinoë. "I wanted to know whether thou hadst attained the truth in the path thou wert travelling, and whither thou hadst arrived. I clad myself in the male attire of the novices; we descended—brother Juventinus and I—to Alexandrea, down the Nile; we travelled by ship to Seleucia Pieria, to the southwest of Antioch; with a large Syrian caravan we crossed Apamea, Epiphaneia, Edessa, till we reached the frontier; among many toils and dangers we traversed

the deserts of Mesopotamia, which had been abandoned by the Persians; not far from the settlement of Abuzat, after thy victory at Ctesiphon, we caught sight of thy camp. And lo, here I am.—Well, and how art thou, Julian? . . ."

He sighed, let his head sink on his chest, and made no reply.

Then, after looking at her from under his brows with a quick, supplicating and suspicious glance, he asked:

"Now thou, also, dost hate me, Arsinoë? . . ."

"Nay. Wherefore?" she replied, softly and simply. "Have not the sages of Hellas approached that whereof He speaks? They that in the desert do torment their flesh and soul,—they are far from the meek Son of Mary. He loved children, and freedom, and the gaiety of feasts, and white lilies. He loved life, Julian. We alone have wandered away from Him, have become entangled, and darkened in spirit. They all style thee Apostate. But they themselves are apostates. . . ."

The Emperor was standing before her on his knees, lifting up his eyes, filled with supplication; tears glistened in them, and slowly coursed down his cheeks.

"No need, no need," he was whispering, "speak not! . . . Wherefore? . . . Leave to me that which has been. . . . Be not, then, my enemy anew! . . ."

"Nay!" exclaimed she, with unrestrainable power. "I must tell thee all. Listen. I know that thou dost love Him. Be silent,—it is thus; therein doth thy curse lie. Against whom hast thou risen up? What enemy art thou of His? When thy lips are cursing the Crucified, thy heart thirsteth after Him. When thou dost struggle against His name, thou art nearer to His spirit than they that with dead lips do repeat: 'Lord, Lord!' Those are thy

enemies, and not He. Wherefore, then, dost thou torment thyself more than the Galilean monks do themselves? . . ."

Julian sprang up, pale; his face had become distorted, his eyes blazed up with malice. He uttered in a whisper, gasping:

"Get thee hence, get thee hence from me! I know all your Galilean wiles! . . ."

Arsinoë looked at him in horror, as upon a madman.

"Julian, Julian! What ails thee? Can it be that because of the mere name? . . ."

But he was already master of himself; the light had gone out of his eyes, his face had become indifferent, almost contemptuous.

"Go away, Arsinoë. Forget all that I have said. Thou canst see,—we are strangers. The shadow of the Crucified lies between us. Thou hast not abjured Him. Whoever is not an enemy of His can not be a friend of mine."

She fell down on her knees before him.

"Wherefore? Wherefore? What art thou doing? Take pity upon thyself, ere it be too late! Turn back,—or else thou . . ."

She did not finish, but he finished her speech for her with a haughty smile:

"Or I shall perish? Be it so. I shall go to the end of my way,—wherever it may bring me. But if, as thou sayest, I have been unjust to the teaching of the Galileans,—do thou recall what I have borne from them, how innumerable, how contemptible my enemies were.—On one occasion the Roman warriors found, in my presence, a lion in the swamps of Mesopotamia, who was tortured by venomous flies; they were crawling into his mane, his ears, his nostrils, not allowing him to breathe; they

had plastered his eyes, and were slowly vanquishing with the bites of their stings the leonine strength.—Such is my downfall; such is the victory of the Galileans over the Roman Cæsar!"

The girl was still holding her arms out to him, without words, without hope, as one friend to a friend who has died. But between them was an abyss which the living can not bridge.

. . . . . .

About the twentieth of July the Roman army, after a long march over the burned plain, found in the deep valley of the small river Durus a little grass which had escaped the fire. The joy of the legionaries on beholding it was beyond words; they lay down on the ground, breathing in the fragrant dampness, and pressed the moist blades of grass to their dusty faces, to their inflamed lids.

Alongside was a field of ripened wheat. The warriors gathered the grain. The rest in the snug valley lasted for three days. On the morning of the fourth, from the surrounding knolls, the Roman sentries descried a cloud either of smoke or of dust. Some thought that it was caused by wild asses, which usually gathered in herds, in order to safeguard themselves from attack by lions; others, that it was the Saracens, attracted by the rumours of the siege of Ctesiphon; a third group expressed an apprehension that it was the main army of King Sapor himself.

The Emperor ordered the trumpets to blow the signal for falling into line.

The cohorts, in defensive order, on the manner of a great regular circle, under the protection of their shields, which were put together and formed, as it were, a series

of brazen walls, pitched camp on the bank of the stream.

The pall of smoke—or dust—remained on the edge of the sky till evening, and none surmised what it concealed.

The night was dark, calm; not a single star shone in the sky.

The Romans slept not; they stood around the flaming bonfires and with taciturn disquiet awaited the morn.

XVIII

At the rising of the sun the Romans caught sight of the Persians. Their enemies were approaching slowly. According to the words of seasoned warriors there were no less than two hundred thousand of them; out from behind the knolls appeared, without a break, ever new divisions.

The flashing of their breast-plates was so blinding that, even through the thick dust, the eyes bore it with difficulty.

The Romans in silence left the valley and fell into battle formation. Their faces were grim, but not sad. The danger had stifled enmity. Their eyes were again turned to the Emperor. The Galileans and the pagans both were surmising by the expression of his face whether hope were possible. The face of the Cæsar glowed with joy. He awaited the meeting with the Persians as a miracle, knowing that a victory would mend all, would give him such glory and power that the Galileans would admit themselves overwhelmed.

The stifling, dusty morning of that twenty-second of July foreboded a sultry day. The Emperor did not wish to don his brazen armour. He remained in a light silken tunic. The commander Victor walked up to him, holding a cuirass in his hands:

"Cæsar, I have seen a bad dream. Tempt not fate,—put on thy breast-plates. . . ."

Julian in silence waved them aside with his hand.

The old man sank to his knees, raising aloft the light armour.

"Don it! Take pity upon thy slave! The battle will be dangerous."

Julian took up a round shield, threw the waving purple of his chlamys over his shoulder, and leapt on a steed.

"Leave me alone, old man! 'Tis not necessary."

And he dashed off, his Bœotian helmet, with its high gilt crest, flashing in the sun.

Victor, shaking his head in disquiet, followed him with his gaze.

The Persians were approaching. There was need to hasten.

Julian disposed his army in a special formation, in the shape of a concave crescent. The enormous semi-circle was supposed to plunge its two sharp tips into the Persian host, and seize it from both sides. The right wing was commanded by Dagalaiph, the left by Gormizda, the centre by Julian and Victor.

The trumpets blared forth.

The earth began to quake, to rumble beneath the soft, heavy feet of the Persian elephants coming at a run; ostrich plumes swayed upon their broad foreheads; leather howdahs, strapped on by means of belly-girths, towered upon their backs; out of each howdah four marksmen were throwing falariques,—missiles burning tar and tow.

The Roman cavalry did not sustain their first rush. With deafening trumpeting, their proboscides jerked upward, the elephants oped their fleshy, humidly rosy mouths, so that the warriors felt upon their faces the breath of these monsters, infuriated with a mixture of

undiluted wine, pepper, and frankincense, with which the barbarians intoxicated them before battles; their tusks, painted with cinnabar, lengthened with barbs of steel, slit the bellies of the horses; their trunks, after entwining the horsemen, lifted them up into the air and dashed them against the ground.

In the blaze of noon-day these grey, quaking carcasses, with flapping folds of hide, gave off a penetratingly acrid odour of sweat. The horses shivered, struggled and snorted whenever they sensed the odour of the elephants.

One cohort had already turned to flight. These were the Christians. Julian dashed off to stop the fleeing ones, and, having struck the chief decurion in the face with his hand, shouted out in fury:

"Ye cowards! Ye can but pray! . . ."

The Thracian, lightly armed archers and the Paphlagonian slingmen went forth against the elephants. They were followed by the Illyrian *martiobarbuli,*—skilled throwers of darts loaded with lead.

Julian commanded arrows, stones from the slings, and the lead-weighted darts to be directed at the feet of the monsters. One arrow lodged in the eye of an enormous Indian elephant. He emitted a squeal and reared up on his hind legs; his girths snapped apart; the saddle with the leathern howdah slipped off, overturning; the Persian marksmen tumbled out, like fledglings out of a nest. In the entire division of the elephants confusion sprang up. The animals, wounded in their legs, crashed down and soon around them formed a whole mountain in motion of piled-up carcasses, with the feet of elephants sticking up. Their bloodied proboscides and broken tusks, the overturned howhahs; the half-crushed

steeds, the wounded, the dead, the Persians, the Romans,—everything became confused.

Finally the elephants turned in flight, threw themselves upon the Persians, and began trampling them.

This danger was foreseen by the military science of the barbarians,—the example of the combat at Nisibis had demonstrated that an army might be destroyed by a detachment of its own elephants.

Thereupon their mahouts with long, sickle-shaped knives, which each carried tied to his right hand, with all their strength drove their weapons home between the two spinal vertebræ nearest the skull of each monster,—one stroke sufficed to make even the biggest and strongest of them keel over dead.

The cohorts of the martiobarbuli dashed forward, scrambling over the carcasses of the wounded elephants, pursuing those in flight.

In the meanwhile the Emperor was already flying to the aid of the left wing. Here the Persian *clibanarii* were attacking,—a famous division of horsemen, bound, forged to one another with the links of an enormous chain, and covered from head to foot with a flexible steel mail; in battle they were invulnerable, well-nigh immortal, resembling statues moulded out of metal; they could be wounded only through the narrow chinks left in their visors for the mouth and eyes.

Against the clibanarii he despatched the cohorts of his old faithful friends, the Batavians and the Celts,—they would die for a single smile from their Emperor, gazing upon him with enraptured, child-like eyes.

On the right wing the Roman cohorts were cut into by the chariots of the Persians, harnessed with striped, slender-limbed zebras; scythes ground to a razor-edge,

fastened to the spokes of the wheels, revolved with horrifying speed, lopping off, at a single sweep, the legs of the horses, the heads of the soldiers,—cutting bodies as easily as the sickle of a harvester cuts the slender stalks of ears of grain.

After mid-day the clibanarii weakened; their breast-plates had become red hot and seared them.

Julian directed his forces against them.

They wavered and were thrown into confusion. A cry of triumph escaped the Emperor. He threw himself forward, pursuing the fleeing, and did not remark that his troops fell behind. The Cæsar was accompanied by a few body-guards, the commander Victor among their number. The old man, wounded in his arm, felt no pain; not for an instant would he leave the Emperor, and repeatedly saved him from mortal danger, screening him with his long shield, sharpened at the lower point. The experienced commander knew that to draw near a fleeing force was as imprudent as to approach a falling building.

"What dost thou, Cæsar?" he was shouting to Julian. "Take care! Take my breast-plate! . . ."

Julian, without heeding, was flying ahead, with arms uplifted, with breast unguarded,—as though he alone, without his army, with the awesomeness of his face and a wave of his hands were driving the countless foes along. Upon his lips played a smile of gaiety; through the cloud of dust, raised up by a whirlwind, flashed his Bœotian helmet, and the folds of his chlamys, bellying in the wind, resembled two gigantic red pinions, that bore him ever farther and farther.

In front of him careened a detachment of Saracens. One of the horsemen turned around, recognized Julian by his raiment, and pointed him out to his comrades

with an abrupt guttural cry, like the throaty cry of an eagle:

"*Malek! Malek!*" which in Arabic signifies: "The King! The King!"

They all turned around, and, without halting their horses, sprang up on their feet, in their white, long bournouses, with spears poised above their heads.

The Emperor saw a swarthy, brigand face,—almost that of a boy. He was galloping at full speed, upon the hump of an enormous Bactrian camel, with clods of mud dangling from the shaggy wool under its belly.

Victor with his shield warded off two Saracen spears directed at the Emperor.

Thereupon the boy upon the camel took aim, and, his feral eyes flashing, bared his white teeth sportively, with a joyous shout:

"*Malek! Malek!*"

"How gay he feels," reflected Julian, "whereas I have still . . ."

He had not time to finish his thought.

The spear whizzed, caught his right arm, grazing his skin slightly, glanced over his ribs, and sank in below the liver.

He thought that the wound was not a serious one and seized the double-edged barb, in order to tear it out, but cut his fingers. Blood spurted out.

Julian cried out loudly, threw back his head, looked up with wide open eyes at the pallid, blazing sky, and fell off his horse into the arms of his body-guards.

Victor supported him. The lips of the old man quivered, and with eyes grown dim he gazed upon the closed orbs of the Cæsar.

The remaining cohorts were gathering together.

XIX

JULIAN was carried over to his pavilion and laid on his camp bed. He did not come to, merely moaning at rare intervals.

The physician Oribasius drew the sharp point of the spear out of the deep wound, which, after inspection, he washed and dressed. Victor questioned him with his eyes if there were hope. Oribasius sadly shook his head.

After the dressing Julian heaved a deep sigh and opened his eyes.

"Where am I? . . ." he looked around him with wonder, as though awaking from a deep sleep.

From afar the noise of battle floated in. Suddenly he recalled everything, and with an effort raised himself up in bed.

"Where is my steed? Quick, Victor! . . ."

A spasm of pain distorted his face. All present rushed forward to support the Cæsar. He thrust Victor and Oribasius away.

"Leave me alone! . . . I must be there, with them, to the end! . . ."

And he slowly rose up to his feet. On his pallid lips was a smile; his eyes were burning.

"You see,—I still have my faculties . . . Quick,—my shield, my sword! Bring my steed! . . ."

His soul was struggling with the end. Victor handed him his shield and sword. Julian took them, and, swaying as children do when learning to walk, took two steps.

His wound opened up. He dropped his armament, sank into the arms of Oribasius and Victor, and, raising his eyes up to heaven, cried out:

" 'Tis the end. . . . Thou hast conquered, Galilean!"

And, no more resisting, he resigned himself to the hands of his attendants; he was tenderly put in his bed.

"Ay, 'tis the end, my friends," he repeated softly, "I am dying. . . ."

Oribasius bent down,—striving to comfort him, assuring him that such wounds usually healed under treatment.

"Do not deceive me," retorted Julian, with resignation; "wherefore? I am not afraid. . . ."

And he added solemnly:

"I shall die the death of the wise."

Toward evening he fell into unconsciousness. Hour passed after hour. The sun sank. The combat had died down. A lampad was lit in the tent. Night was coming on. He did not come to. His breath grew weaker,—they thought him dying. Finally his eyes slowly opened. His intent, unmoving gaze was directed at one corner of the tent; a rapid, faint whisper escaped his lips; he was in a delirium:

"Thou? . . . Here? . . . Wherefore? . . . What matters it?—'tis all over. Get thee gone! Thou didst hate . . . That is what we will not forgive. . . ."

Then he came to for a brief space, and asked Oribasius:

"What is the hour? Shall I behold the sun? . . ."

And, after a short reflection, he added, with a sad smile:

"Oribasius, can it really be that reason is so impotent? . . . I know,—'tis the weakness of the body. Blood, hav-

ing overfilled the brain, giveth birth to visions. One must conquer . . . reason must needs . . ."

His thoughts were tangling again, his gaze was becoming fixed.

"I do not will it! . . . Dost thou hear? . . . Get thee gone. Away, Tempter! I do not believe! Socrates died like a god. . . . Reason must needs . . . Victor, O Victor. . . . What wouldst thou have with me, Galilean? Thy love is more fearful than death. Thy yoke is a most heavy yoke. Wherefore dost Thou gaze thus? . . . How I did love thee, Good Pastor,—Thee alone. . . . Nay, nay! Transpierced hands and feet? Blood? Darkness? . . . I long for the sun,—the sun! . . . Wherefore dost Thou screen the sun? . . ."

There fell the stillest and darkest hour of the night.

The legions returned to camp. Their victory did not make them rejoice. Despite their weariness, almost no one slept. They awaited news from the Emperor's tent. Many, standing by the expiring fires and leaning with one arm upon their long spears, dozed in exhaustion. One could hear the hobbled horses munching oats, and their occasional deep breaths.

Whitish striæ appeared on the edge of the sky, between the dark tents. The stars seemed farther, chillier. There came a breath of dampness. The steel of the spears and the brass of the shields dimmed from a grey tinge of dew,—the grey of cobwebs. The roosters of the Etruscan soothsayers, the prophetic birds, whom the priests had not drowned, despite the command of the Augustus, crowed their chant. There was a soft pensiveness upon earth and upon heaven. All things seemed spectral,—the near seemed distant, the distant near.

At the entrance to the Cæsar's tent thronged his

friends,—his military leaders, his intimates; in the murk they appeared pallid shades to one another.

Within the pavilion reigned a silence still more solemn. With a monotonous sound the physician Oribasious was pounding in a copper mortar medicinal herbs for a refreshing draught.

The sick man had grown calmer; his delirium had ceased.

At dawn he regained consciousness for the last time, and asked with impatience:

"But when will the sun rise? . . ."

"In an hour," answered Oribasius, having glanced at the level of the water in the glass walls of the water-clock.

"Summon the commanders," ordered Julian, "I must speak to them."

"Gracious Cæsar, thou hast need of repose," remarked the physician.

" 'Tis all one. I shall not die ere the sun rise.—Victor, raise my head. So. 'Tis well."

They told him of the victory over the Persians, of the flight of Meranes, the leader of the enemy's cavalry, with two sons of the King; of the débâcle of fifty satraps. He showed no wonder, he evinced no joy; his face remained indifferent.

There entered those near to him: Dagalaiph, Gormizda, Nevittus, Arintheus, Lucillian, and the Prefect of the East,—Sallustius; in front of them walked the comes Jovian. Many, with an eye to the future, expressed a desire to see upon the throne this weak, timid man, who would be dangerous to none. During his reign they hoped to rest from the alarums of a too tempestuous rule. Jovian had thoroughly mastered the art of pleasing

everybody. He was tall and of benign mien, with an insignificant face which became lost in the throng. His heart was virtuous and nugatory.

Here, too, among the Emperor's intimates, was to be found the young centurion of the court shield-bearers, the future historian, Ammianus Marcellinus. Everybody knew that he was keeping a chronicle of the expedition. Having entered the tent, Ammianus took out his waxed tablets and a copper stylus. He prepared to write down the last words of the Emperor.

"Lift up the hanging," ordered Julian.

The covering over the entrance was thrown back. They all stepped aside. The morning chill blew upon the face of the dying man. The door looked to the East. Not far off was a precipice,—nothing obstructed the sky.

"So. 'Tis well. Put out the lamp. . . ."

The flame was extinguished; murk filled the tent. All stood expectant, in silence.

"Hearken, my friends," the Cæsar began his death-bed speech; he spake low, but distinctly; his face was calm.

Ammianus Marcellinus was writing it down.

"Hearken, my friends: my hour has struck;—perhaps much too early; but, as ye can see, I rejoice, like a trust-worthy debtor, returning my life to nature,—and there is within my soul nor sorrow, nor fear; there is in it but the calm joyousness of the wise, a premonition of an eternal rest. I have fulfilled my duty, and, in recalling the past, I have nothing to repent. In those days when, pursued by all, I awaited death in the desert of Cappadocia, in the castle of Macellum, and later, at the summit of greatness, under the purple of the Roman Cæsar,—I kept my soul immaculate, striving toward lofty ends. But

if I have not fulfilled all that I was fain to do,—forget not, men, that the affairs of the earth are directed by the forces of destiny.—Now I bless the Eternal for that He hath given me to die not of a lingering malady, not by the hand of a headsman or a villain, but on the field of battle, in the flower of my youth, in the midst of unfinished exploits. . . . Tell, my beloved ones, to my enemies and to my friends, how die the Hellenes, fortified by the wisdom of the ancients."

He fell silent. All sank down on their knees. Many were weeping.

"What are ye weeping over, my poor ones?" asked Julian with a smile. " 'Tis unseemly to bewail him who is returning to his native land. . . . Victor, be consoled! . . ."

The old man strove to answer, but could not; he covered his face with his hands and began to sob still more vehemently.

"Softer, softer," uttered Julian, turning his gaze upon the distant sky. "There it is! . . ."

The clouds caught on fire. The murk within the tent became amber, warm. The first beam of the sun flashed out. The dying man turned his face toward it.

Thereupon the Prefect of the East, Sallustius Secundus, having drawn near, kissed the hand of Julian:

"Blessed Augustus, whom dost thou designate thy successor?"

"It does not matter," replied the Emperor. "Fate will decide. We must not oppose it. Let the Galileans exult. We shall conquer,—afterward; and—the sun is with us!—Look, there it is, there it is! . . ."

A faint tremor ran through all his body, and with a last effort he lifted up his arms, as though he longed to

hasten toward the sun, and meet it. Black blood spurted out of his wound; his veins strained, standing out on his temples and neck.

"Drink, drink!" he said in a whisper, gasping.

Victor put up to his lips a deep chalice,—golden, shining, filled to the edges with pure water from a well-spring. Julian gazed at the sun, and slowly, with avid swallows, drank the water,—translucent, as cold as ice.

Then his head fell back. Out of his half-open lips escaped a final sigh, a final whisper:

"Rejoice! . . . Death—is the sun. . . .[49] I am even as thou art, Helios! . . ."

His gaze was extinguished. Victor closed his eyes.

The face of the Emperor, in the glow of the sun, resembled the face of a god fallen into slumber.

XX

THREE months had passed after the signing of the peace with the Persians by the Emperor Jovian.

In the beginning of October the Roman army, emaciated by famine and endless marches through sultry Mesopotamia, returned to Antioch.

During the journey, the tribune of the shield-bearers, Anatolius, had made friends with the youthful historian, Ammianus Marcellinus. The friends decided to journey to Italy, to a secluded villa near Baiæ, whither Arsinoë was inviting them, and where they would be able to recuperate from the arduous campaign and heal their wounds in the sulphur springs.

In passing they stopped for several days in Antioch.

There all were on tiptoes in expectation of the magnificent celebrations in honour of Jovian's ascension to the throne, and the return of the troops. The peace concluded with King Sapor was an ignominious one for the Empire,—five rich Roman provinces lying on the farther side of the Tigris, Corduen and Regimena among their number, and fifteen frontier fortresses, as well as the cities of Singara, Castra Maurororum, and the inaccessible ancient stronghold of Nisibis, which had withstood three sieges,—all passed into the hands of Sapor.

But the Galileans gave but little thought to this rout of Rome. When tidings of the death of Julian the Apostate reached Antioch, the frightened citizens would not believe at first, fearing that this was a Satanic guile, a

new snare to entangle the righteous; but, finally believing, they waxed mad for joy.

Early in the morning the hubbub of the holiday, the outcries of the populace, burst in through the tightly closed shutters into the half-dark bed-chamber of Anatolius. He decided to pass the whole day in the house. The exultation of the rabble was repugnant to him. He strove to fall asleep again, but could not. A strange curiosity took possession of him. He dressed rapidly, saying nothing to Ammianus, and went out into the street.

It was a sunny autumn day, fresh but not chill. Large round clouds on the dark-blue sky blended with the white marble of the endless Antiochian colonnades and porticoes. At each corner, in all the marts and forums, one heard the plashing of fountains. In the sunnily dusty vistas of the streets one could see the broad moving streams of the city aqueducts, crossing one another in threads of crystal. Pigeons, cooing, pecked at the scattered barley. There was an odour of flowers, and of incense from the portals of churches, flung wide open, and of wet dust. Swarthy maidens, laughing to each other, were sprinkling baskets of pale October roses at limpid cisterns, and, afterwards, with joyous chanting of psalms, entwined with garlands the pillars of the Christian basilicas.

The crowd, with unceasing hum and talking, filled the streets; chariots and litters moved in slow procession over the magnificent Antiochian paved way,—the pride of the city council of decurions.

One heard enraptured cries:

"Long live Jovian Augustus,—the blessed, the great!"

Some added: "Victor!"—but without much assurance, inasmuch as the word "Victor" echoed too much of mockery.

The very same street urchin that on a time had been scrawling charcoal caricatures of Julian upon walls, was now clapping his palms, whistling, hopping about, wallowing in the dust, like a sparrow, and shouting:

"He hath perished, he hath perished, this wild boar, that did desolate the vineyard of God!"

He was echoing the word of his elders.

A bent crone, all in tatters, who found snug quarters in some damp hole of the filthy suburb, like some multipede—even she had crawled out into the sun, rejoicing at the holiday. She was brandishing a stick and vociferating in a querulous voice:

"Julian hath perished,—the evil-doer hath perished!"

The gaiety of the holiday was reflected, as well, in the wide-open, wonder-struck eyes of a babe at the breast, cradled in the arms of a swarthy, emaciated woman, who worked by the day in a manufactory. The mother had given him a honey cake; seeing the gay garments, bright in the sun, he waved his little arms in rapture, and suddenly, turning away his chubby, dirty little face, smeared with honey, chuckled knavishly, as though he comprehended everything right well, but could not voice his feelings. As for the mother, she reflected with pride that her clever boy was sharing the festivity of the righteous over the death of the Rejected One.

There was infinite sadness in the heart of Anatolius. But he walked on farther, farther, drawn along by the same strange curiosity.

Over the street of Syngón, he drew near to the

cathedral basilica. Upon the church porch, flooded with the vivid sunlight, there was a still greater crush. He caught sight of the familiar face of the official of the quæstura, Marcus Ausonius, coming out of the basilica, accompanied by two slaves, who were clearing a way through the throng with their elbows.

"What is this?" Anatolius wondered. "How has this hater of the Galileans gotten into the church?"

Crosses, broidered with gold, could be seen on the lilac chlamys of Ausonius, and even upon the uppers of his crimson leather slippers.

Junius Mauricus, another acquaintance of Anatolius, approached Ausonius.

"How art thou, most worthy sir?" asked Mauricus, with an assumed mock wonder, scrutinizing the new Christian attire of the official.

Junius was a man of leisure, sufficiently wealthy, and adoption of Christianity did not represent for him any special gain. He was not in the least amazed at the sudden conversion of his friends the officials, but he liked at every meeting to tease them with interrogations, assuming the air of a man affronted, who concealed his indignation under a mask of mockery.

The crowd was entering the portals of the church. The porch emptied. The friends could converse freely. Anatolius, standing behind a column, could hear their conversation.

"Why, then, did you not stay to the end of the service?" asked Mauricus.

"Palpitation of the heart. . . . Too stuffy inside. . . . What can one do?—I am not used to it. . . ."

And he added meditatively:

"'This new preacher hath a strange style,—hyperboles

have too strong a reaction upon me; 'tis as if he were drawing iron across glass. . . . A strange style! . . ."

"True, 'tis a touching thing," Maurícus exulted maliciously. "Thou hast betrayed everything, hast abjured all things,—but when it comes to a good style! . . ."

"Nay, nay,—I have not as yet, perhaps, simply gotten into the taste of things," Ausonius, recalling himself, cut him short. "Please, Maurícus, have no ill-opinion of me,—for I am sincere. . . ."

Out of a roomy litter there slowly crawled, grunting and oh-ing, the carcass of the quæstor Gargilian:

" 'Twould seem I have come late? . . . No matter,—I will stand in the porch a while. God is the Ghost, dwelling in . . ."

"What miracles!" laughed Maurícus. "The Holy Writ, from the lips of Gargilian. . . ."

"Christ have mercy upon thee, my son," Gargilian turned to him, imperturbably, "why art thou for ever uttering words that wound,—for ever uttering words full of sly malice?"

"I cannot get over it! How many conversions, how many transformations! I, for instance, had ever supposed that thy convictions, at least . . ."

"What nonsense, my dear fellow! I have but one conviction: that the Galilean cooks are not in the least inferior to the Hellenic. As for lenten dishes,—they are indisputably something to gourmandize over. Come to supper, philosopher! I shall soon enough convert thee to my faith. Thou shalt lick thy fingers.—Is it not all the same, my friends, whether one eat a good dinner in honour of the god Mercury or in honour of Saint Mercury? Mere prejudices! I ask you,—wherein is this little thing a hindrance?"

And he showed a modest little amber cross, dangling among the scented folds of precious amethystine purple upon his majestic belly.

"Look ye, look ye,—Hekebolius, the high priest of Astarte Dindymene,—a repentant hierophant in dark Galilean raiment! O, wherefore art thou not here, thou singer of the *Metamorphoses!*" exulted Mauricus, pointing to an ancient of benign mien, ornamented with grey hairs, with a quiet dignity upon his pleasing rosy face, sitting in a half-closed litter.

"What is he reading?"

"Of course, not the ritual of the goddess of Pessinus!" [1]

"Look at his meekness, now,—his saintliness! He hath grown thin from fasting. Look ye, he is raising his eyes up above, and sighing!"

"He has, probably, gone to the Emperor Jovian, as on a time to Julian, and repented?"

"O nay,—everything was done after a new fashion. Unexpectedly. A repentance before all the people. He laid down on the ground, right in the midst of a throng of the populace, in front of a certain basilica, out of which Jovian was coming, and fell to crying in a loud voice: 'Trample upon me, that am vile, that am the salt without savour!' And with tears he kissed the feet of the passers-by!"

"Aye, that *was* done after a new fashion.—Well, and did it prove to the Emperor's liking?"

"How else! They say there was a private audience with the Emperor. Oh, such men are not consumed of flames, neither do they sink! Every wind blows them weal. He will slough off his old skin,—he will grow younger. Learn, my children!"

"Well, and whatever could he have said to the Emperor?"

"What could he not have said!" sighed Gargilian, not without a secret envy. "He might have whispered to him: 'Hold hard by Christianity, and there shall not be left in the world a single pagan; the orthodox faith is a strengthening of thy throne.' Now his road lies straight before him. Far better than with Julian. There's no catching up with him. The height of wisdom, his!"

"Oh, oh, oh, benefactors, intercede for me, take compassion upon me! Snatch your most meek slave Cicumbricus out of the jaws of the lion!"

"What is the matter with thee?" Gargilian asked of a bandy-legged phthisic cobbler, with a kind, distracted face, his wisps of grey hair clumsily sticking up. He was led by two Roman spear-bearers attached to the gaol.

"They be dragging me off to a dungeon!"

"Wherefore?"

"For looting a church."

"What? Can it be possible that thou . . . ?"

"Nay, nay,—I may merely have cried out, in the crowd, a couple of times, 'Kill them!' This was still during the reign of Augustus Julian. Then they were saying: ' 'Twould be pleasing to the Cæsar that we destroy the Galilean churches.' And so destroy them we did. But now they have lodged a complaint that, apparently, I had carried a silver sacramental rhipidion off the altar under my clothes. But I have not e'en been in the church; I did but cry out from the street twice: 'Kill them!' I am a peaceful man. My little shop is a miserable one, but on a populous spot,—if there be a fight, they never fail to drag me in. Why, did I do it for myself? What is it to me? . . . I thought it was thus com-

manded.—Oh, intercede for me, my fathers, take compassion upon me! . . ."

"But what art thou,—a Christian or a pagan?" asked Junius.

"I know not, benefactors, I know not myself! Before the Emperor Constantine I used to bring sacrifices to the gods. Then they baptised me. During the reign of Constantius I became an Arian. Then the Hellenes came into power. I went over to the Hellenes. But now, evidently, things are going on after the old way. I would fain repent, and return to the Arian church. But then, I fear me I may miss the mark once more. I have wrecked the temples of the idols, only to rebuild them, and then wreck them anew. All has become confusion. I cannot make out myself what I am, and what is taking place with me. I am obedient to the powers that be, but still I cannot, in any way, strike upon the correct faith. I always miss it! Either I am too early, or too late. I can see but one thing,—that there is no peace for me; or has it been written so since my birth? They beat me for Christ, they beat me for the gods.—I feel sorry for my little bairns.—Oh, intercede for me, benefactors; liberate Cicumbricus, a slave most humble!"

"Fear not, dear fellow," uttered Gargilian with a smile of mockery, "we shall set thee free. We shall exert ourselves.—'Twas thou that didst sew for me such glorious half-boots, that creaked."

Cicumbricus fell on his knees, hopefully stretching forth his arms, loaded down with chains.

Having become somewhat reassured, he looked at his patrons timidly, from underneath his brows, and asked:

"Well, and what concerning my faith now, my benefactors? . . . Should I repent and henceforth stand firm

to the end? Does it mean that there will be no change again? But then, I fear me that once more . . ."

"Nay, nay, calm thyself," Gargilian burst into laughter, " 'tis all ended now,—there will be no change!"

Anatolius, unperceived by his friends, entered the church. He felt a desire to hear the famous young evangelist, Theodorite.

Upon the swaying clouds of incense the oblique rays of the sun quivered in bluish sheaves, penetrating through the narrow upper windows of the enormous cupola, that resembled a golden heaven, the symbol of a sovereign Church Universal. One ray fell on the fiery-rufous beard of the evangelist, standing upon a lofty ambo. He had lifted up his emaciated, pale hands, which were almost transparent in the sun, like wax; his eyes blazed with joy; his voice thundered:

"I would limn upon a column of infamy the story of Julian the malefactor, the apostate! May all the ages and all the nations read my inscription, may they all be horrified by the justice of the wrath of the Lord! Come thou hither, come, thou torturer, thou serpent of great wisdom! Now shall we make a mock of thee! Let us join in spirit, brethren, and let us exult in joy, and strike upon tympani, and chant forth the victorious song of Miriam of Israel concerning the drowning of the Ægyptians in the Red Sea! May the desert rejoice and burst into bloom, even as a flower-plat, and may the church rejoice, that but yesterday and the day before did seem a widow and an orphan! . . . Behold ye,—from joyance I wax even as one drunk, as one mad! . . . What voice, what gift of the word, shall equal this miracle? . . . Where are thy sacrifices, rites and mysteries, O Emperor? Where be thy incantations and the portents of thy gas-

tromancers? Where is thy art of divination by the dissected viscera of living men? [82] Where is the glory of Babylon? Where be the Persians and the Medes? Where be the gods that did accompany thee, that thou didst accompany,—thy guardians, Julian?—All has vanished, proved deceptive, scattered on the wind! . . ."

"Ah, my darling, what a beard!" a rather aged, berouged matron, standing alongside of Anatolius, remarked in a whisper in the ear of her companion. "Look, look,—it gives off a sheen of gold! . . ."

"Aye,—but what of his teeth?" her companion voiced a doubt.

"Well, what do teeth matter? With a beard like that. . . ."

"Ah, nay, nay, Veronica, how canst thou,—do not say that! Teeth *do* mean something, too. Can one compare him with Brother Theophanis? . . ."

Theodorite was thundering:

"God hath overwhelmed the sinews of the lawless one! For that Julian had nourished impiety within him, like to those most evil of the crawling reptiles, and beasts, that do collect venom within their bodies. God bided his time till all the evil had become manifest in Julian, like to a certain malignant furuncle. . . ."

"What if we should be late for the circus?" another neighbour of Anatolius, an artisan, was whispering in the ear of his comrade. "They say there are going to be she-bears there from Britannia!"

"Get along with thee! Are there really going to be she-bears?"

"Of course! One they call the Golden Sparklet; the other, Innocency. They're fed on human flesh.—And there be gladiators, to boot!"

"Lord Jesus! Gladiators to boot! What if we should let the chance slip by? 'Tis all one,—we shall never hear the end of this. Let us slip away, brother,—as fast as we can; otherwise all the places will be taken."

Now Theodorite was eulogizing the predecessor of Julian, Constantius, for his Christian virtues, for the purity of his morals, for his love of his kindred.

Anatolius felt stifling in the throng. He walked out of the church, and with pleasure took a deep breath of the fresh air, without the smell of incense and the stench of burning lamps; with pleasure he glanced up at the pure sky, not screened by a golden cupola.

In the portals the people were talking loudly, without constraint. Important tidings had spread through the crowd,—the two she-bears would at any moment be driven in iron cages through the streets, on their way to the amphitheatre. Those who heard the news were running out of the church impulsively, with concerned faces.

"What? How? Have we come too late? Is it really the truth, that the Golden Sparklet is ailing?"

"Nonsense! 'Twas Innocency that had her stomach upset during the night. She over-ate. It has passed now. They are both right healthy."

"Glory be to God, glory be to God!"

No matter how delectable the eloquence of Theodorite may have been, it could not vanquish the seductiveness of the gladiatorial games, and the she-bears from Britannia. The church emptied. Anatolius saw how, from all quarters of the city, out of all the abandoned basilicas, puffing people were running in the direction of the circus; they knocked each other off their feet; they cursed, they crushed children, they jumped over women

who had fallen, dropping their sandals and rushing on farther; upon their sweating, red faces there was such a fear of being late as if it were a matter of life and death.

And two tender names fluttered from lip to lip, like sweet promises of joys unknown:

"Golden Sparklet! Innocency!"

Anatolius followed the crowd into the amphitheatre.

According to Roman custom, a *velarium,* sprinkled with perfumes, protected the populace from the sun, spreading fresh, red-tinted twilight. The many-headed horde was already turbulent upon the descending, round steps.

Before the beginning of the games the higher Antiochian dignitaries carried a bronze statue of Jovian into the Imperial loge, that the crowd might find delectation in gazing upon the countenance of the new Cæsar. In his right hand he held the terrestrial globe, crowned with a cross. A blinding sunbeam penetrated between the purple pieces of canvas of the velarium, and fell upon the brow of the Emperor; it began to sparkle, and the crowd beheld upon the bronze, flat face a smile of self-satisfaction. The officials were kissing the feet of the graven image. The rabble roared in delight:

"Glory, glory to the saviour of the fatherland, the Augustus Jovian! [50] Perished is Julian, punished is the wild boar, that did desolate the vineyard of God!"

Countless hands waved multi-coloured kerchiefs and belts in the air. The rabble was hailing in Jovian its reflection, its spirit, its image, become regnant over the universe. Mocking the demised Emperor, the mob addressed him as if he were present in the amphitheatre, and capable of hearing them:

"Well, now, philosopher? Of no avail to thee was the

wisdom of Plato and of Chrysippus, nor wast thou shielded either by the Thunderer, or by far-darting Phœbus! Thou hast fallen into the talons of the devils,—and may they tear in pieces the blasphemer! Where are thy divinations, foolish Maximus?—Christos and His God have conquered! We, the meek ones, have conquered!"

They were all certain that Julian had fallen by the hand of a Christian; they thanked God for "the saving stroke" and glorified the regicide.

But when they beheld the swarthy flesh of the gladiators beneath the claws of Golden Sparklet and Innocency, the mob became possessed with fury. Their eyes were dilating and would not be sated with the sight of blood. To the roaring of the beasts the mob responded with a human roaring, still more savage. The Christians chanted praise to God, as though but now they had beheld the triumph of their faith:

"Glory to the Emperor, the praiseworthy Jovian! Christ hath conquered, Christ hath conquered!"

Anatolius with revulsion felt the malodorous breath of the rabble,—the odour of the human herd. With his eyes shut, trying not to breathe, he ran out into the street, returned home, locked his doors, closed the shutters tightly, threw himself on the bed, and lay thus, without moving, till late in the evening.

But of salvation from the rabble there was none.

Barely had it grown dark, when all Antioch was illuminated with lights. Upon the corners of the basilicas and the high roofs of government buildings smoked enormous lamps, blown by the wind; little flat lamps sent up their soot on the streets. And into the room of Anatolius, through the cracks of the shutters, penetrated

the glow of lights, the evil stench of burning pitch and tallow. From adjacent inns he could hear the drunken songs of soldiers and sailors, the laughter, squeals and curses of the street trollops; and, over all, like to the noise of waters, hovered the never silent words of praise to Jovian the Saviour, and anathemas to Julian the Apostate.

Anatolius, with a bitter smile, raising his arms up to heaven, exclaimed:

"Verily, Thou hast conquered, Galilean!"

XXI

THE merchant trireme was a large one, with Asiatic rugs and amphoræ of olive oil, making a voyage from Seleucis Antioch to the shores of Italy. Among the islands of the Ægean Archipelago it treaded its way in the direction of the Island of Crete, where it had to take on a cargo of wool, and land several monks at their isolated cloister on the shore of the sea. These ancients, situated on the forward part of the deck, passed whole days in pious conversations, prayers, and the usual monastic labour,—the weaving of baskets out of palm-branches.

Upon the opposite side, near the stern, ornamented with an oaken carving of the Athena Tritogeneia,[51] under a light awning of violet stuff as a protection from the sun, other travellers had ensconced themselves snugly, with whom the monks would have nothing to do, since they were pagans; they were Anatolius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Arsinoë.

The evening was calm. The rowers, Alexandrean captives with shaven heads, lowered and raised their long, pliant oars rhythmically, chanting a dismal song. The sun was going down behind clouds. Anatolius gazed upon the waves and recalled the words of Æschylos anent "the much-laughing sea." After the bustle, dust, and the sultriness of the streets of Antioch, after the malodorous breath of the rabble, and the sootiness of the festival illuminating cups, he found repose, repeating:

" 'Thou much-laughing,' receive and purify my soul!"

Calymna, Amorgos, Astypalæa, Thera,—like visions, one after another, those isles swam into their ken, now rearing up above the sea, now vanishing anew, as though around the horizon the sisters-oceanides were dancing their eternal dance. To Anatolius it seemed that here the times of the *Odyssey* were not yet past.

His companions did not break in on his silent reveries. Each one was plunged in work of his or her own. Ammianus was putting in order his notes on the Persian Campaign, on the life of the Emperor Julian, while of evenings, for relaxation, he read the celebrated creation of the Christian teacher, Clement of Alexandria,—*Stromata,—The Rug of Many-Coloured Patches.*

Arsinoë was moulding little images out of wax, preparatory experiments for a large one, to be done in marble. It was the nude body of some Olympian god, his face fraught with unearthly sadness,—Anatolius desired, but never found resolution enough to ask her who it was,—Dionysos or Christos?

Arsinoë had long since abandoned her monastic garments. Pious folk averted their faces from her with contempt, styling her an Apostatrice. But from actual persecution she was saved by the glorious name of her ancestors, and the remembrance of the rich endowments with which on a time she had honoured many Christian cloisters. Of her former wealth there was left to her only a small part, but even this was enough to live on without hardships.

On the shore of the Bay of Naples, not far from Baiæ, there remained to her a small country estate, with that same villa wherein Myrrha had passed her last days.

Here Arsinoë, Anatolius and Marcellinus had agreed to seek rest after their late years of alarums, in rustic quiet and in the service of the Muses.

The erstwhile nun now wore almost the same sort of raiment as she had worn before taking the veil: the simple folds of her peplum made her once more resemble a maiden of ancient Athens; but the colour of the stuff was dark, and the pale gold of her curls glimmered but faintly through the little veil, like those she had formerly worn, thrown over her head; in her dull-black eyes, which had never laughed, there was a stern, almost an austere, calm; only her arms, bared to the very shoulders, flashed forth in their candour from under the folds of her peplum, as the artist worked, impatiently, as though with anger, kneading and rolling the wax. Anatolius sensed daring and strength in those white, seemingly malicious hands.

On that evening the ship was sailing past a little island. None knew its name; from a distance it seemed a barren crag. In order to avoid under-water rocks, the ship had to pass very near its shore. Here, around a precipitous cape, the sea was so limpid that one could see on the bottom the silvery-white sand, with black mossy patches.

Out from behind the dark crags appeared peaceful little green dells. She-goats and sheep were browsing thereon. In the middle of the cape grew a platane. Anatolius noticed upon its lichen-covered roots a youth and a maid; they were, probably, the children of poor shepherds. Beyond them, in a cypress grove, gleamed whitely a marble Pan with a pipe of nine reeds.

Anatolius turned around to Arsinoë, pointing to this peaceful coign of Hellas. But the words died away on

his lips,—intently, with a smile of strange joyousness, the artist was gazing upon the little figure moulded by her out of wax: an equivocal and seductive image, with the splendidly beautiful body of an Olympian, with an unearthly sorrow on its face.

The heart of Anatolius contracted. He asked her abruptly, almost angrily, indicating the statuette:

"Who is this?"

Slowly, as though with an effort, she lifted up her eyes,—"Such must be the eyes of the Sibyls," he reflected.

"Dost thou hope, Arsinoë," continued Anatolius, "that men shall comprehend thee?"

"Is it not all the same?" she uttered softly, with a sad smile.

And, after a silence, still more softly, as though to herself:

"We must be implacable and awesome, even as Mithra-Dionysos in his glory and might; compassionate of heart and meek, even as Jesus the Galilean. . . ."

"What art thou saying? Can these two things ever co-exist?"

The sun was sinking ever lower. Under it, on the edge of the sky, lay a cloud. The last rays, with sadness and tenderness, were lighting up the island. Now the youth and the maid had drawn near to the sacrificial altar of Pan, in order to perform the evening libation.

"Dost thou think," said Anatolius, "that our unknown brethren will soon lift up the fallen clue of our life, and follow it farther? Dost thou think that not all things will perish in this barbarian darkness, descending upon Rome and Hellas? Oh, were it but so, if one could but know that the future . . ."

"Aye," exclaimed Arsinoë, and her austere dark eyes lit up with a fatidical fire. "The future is in us,—in our sorrow! Julian was right,—in ignominy, in speechlessness, strangers to all and solitary, must we endure to the end; must hide in the ashes the last spark, so that generations to come may have wherewith to light new luminaries. From that wherewith we end will they begin. Some day men will disinter the sacred bones of Hellas, broken-off fragments of divine marble, and shall, anew, pray and weep over them; they will search out in graves the mouldered pages of our books, and shall anew, like children, spell out by syllables the ancient legends of Homer, the wisdom of Plato. Then shall Hellas arise again,—and with it, we!"

"And, together with us, our sorrow!" exclaimed Anatolius. "Wherefore? Who shall come off victor in this struggle? When shall it end? Answer, Sibyl, if thou canst!"

Arsinoë kept silent, with eyes cast down; finally, she glanced up at Ammianus, and indicated him to Anatolius:

"There is one that will answer thee better than I. He suffers as much as we. But nevertheless he has not lost his clarity of spirit. See, how calmly and intelligently he listens."

Ammianus Marcellinus, having put aside the works of Clement, was lending an ear to their conversation, in silence.

"Really," Anatolius turned to him with his usual, somewhat frivolous smile, "'tis already more than four months that thou and I are friends, and yet I up to now know not what thou art,—a Christian or a Hellene?"

"Why, I myself know not," answered Ammianus simply.

"But how wouldst thou write thy *Chronicles of the Roman Empire?*" [52] Anatolius questioned him. "One scale of the balance—the Christian or the Hellenic—must outweigh the other. Or wilt thou leave posterity perplexed as to thy convictions?"

"That is not necessary for them to know," the historian made answer. "To be just to the Christians and the Hellenes,—such is my aim. I loved the Emperor Julian; but not even for him shall dip either scale of the balance in my hand. Let no one in times to come decide what I was,—even as I myself decide not."

Anatolius had already had occasion to witness the refined urbanity of Ammianus, his unassuming and unfeigned valour in war, his calm fidelity in friendship; now he was admiring in him a new trait,—the profound clarity of his reason.

"Ay, thou art a historian born, Ammianus,—a dispassionate judge of our passionate age. Thou shalt reconcile two warring wisdoms," uttered Arsinoë.

"I shall not be the first," retorted Ammianus.

He arose, pointing to the parchment scrolls of the works of the great Christian teacher:

"Everything of that nature is here, and much else, still better,—which I shall not be able to utter; 'tis the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandrea. He proveth that all the might of Rome, all the wisdom of Hellas, are but a way to the teaching of Christ,—merely portents, premonitions, hints; broad steps, Propylæa leading into the Kingdom of God. Plato is a precursor of Jesus the Galilean!"

These last words of Ammianus, uttered with such

simplicity, struck Anatolius, as though he had suddenly recalled that all this had already taken place at some time,—everything to the least trifle: the island, illumined by the evening sun, and the strong, pleasant tarry odour of the ship, and the unexpected, simple words anent Plato, the Precursor of Jesus. He thought he saw a broad staircase, of marble, flooded by the sun, many-columned, like the Propylæa in Athens, leading straight up to the blue sky.

In the meanwhile the trireme had been slowly turning the bend of the cape. The cypress grove had almost disappeared from view behind the cliff. Anatolius cast a final look upon the youth standing beside the maiden, before the statue of Pan; she had tipped over the sacrificial altar a simple cup of wood, bringing the evening offering to the god,—goat's-milk, mixed with honey; the shepherd was preparing to play his pipe. The trireme was entering the open sea. Everything vanished behind a salience of the shore. Only the thin spiral of the sacrificial smoke rose up straight over the grove.

Upon the sky, upon the earth, and upon the sea there fell a silence.

And in the silence were suddenly heard the slow sounds of churchly chanting,—these were the ancients, the eremites, on the forward part of the deck, singing their evening prayer in chorus.

At this instant over the unmoving surface of the sea floated sounds of another nature,—the shepherd lad was playing on his pipe an evening hymn to the god Pan. Anatolius' heart quivered from astonishment and joy.

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," chanted the monks.

And high, up to the very sky, arose the pure sounds

of the pastoral syrinx, blending with the words of the Lord's prayer.

The last ray of the sun expired on the stones of the blessed isle. Now anew it seemed a dead crag in the midst of the sea. Both hymns fell silent at the same time.

The wind was soughing through the rigging. Waves were lashing high. A halcyon was moaning piteously. Shadows came running from the west, and the sea darkened. A cloud was gathering. The first peals of thunder reached them dully. Night and the tempest were advancing.

But within the heart of Anatolius, of Ammianus, and of Arsinoë, like a never-sinking sun, there was already the great joyousness of the Rebirth.

FINIS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. The goddess Cybele was worshipped at Pessinus and on Mount Dindymus (a mountain of Galatia in Asia Minor); hence called Dindymene.

2. The Parcæ, or Fates, were three: Nona, Decuma and Morta; identical with the Greek Mœræ, dwellers in the abyss Demogorgon,—Clotho held the spindle with the thread of life, Lachesis drew it out, and Atropos wielded the fatal shears.

3. "The rod and reproof give wisdom." Prov. xxix:15.

4. St. Matthew, xiii:42 and 50, for this reading. St. Matthew, viii:12, xxii:13, xxiv:51, xxv:30, and St. Luke, xiii:28, specify "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Antidote: Ecclesiastes, ii:24, iii:13, v:18, and, especially, viii:15. I Corinthians, xv:32, is not quite as good.

5. Revelation, vi:8.

6. Revelation, vi:12.

7. Revelation, vi:16, 17.

8. Revelation, ix:6.

9. Revelation, xiv:13.

10. Revelation, xiv:19, 20.

11. Revelation, xvi:11.

12. Revelation, xiv:9-11.

13. St. John, viii:12, ix:5.

14. I have not, despite my best endeavours, been able to locate this passage. Any information would be appreciated.

15. St. Luke, xx:25; also Matthew, xxii:21, and Mark, xii:17.

16. St. Luke, xiv:26.

17. That gate in a Roman encampment near which the tenth cohort of the legion was stationed.

18. ". . . be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." St. Matthew, x:16.

19. Psalms, li:7.

20. Psalms, lxxiv:1.

21. Psalms, xliv:13, 14.

22. The Apocrypha: The Song of the Three Holy Children.

23. A broad vertical stripe of purple, generally down the front of the tunic, denoting the rank of senator.

24. See Note 55, my translation *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* (No. 138, The Modern Library).

25. Psalms, xci:13, reads "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." I have preferred, because of its picturesqueness, to translate the Russian version for the text.

26. Psalms, xci:11.

27. St. Luke, xi:52.

28. St. Matthew, xxiii:14.

29. I Corinthians, i:20.

30. Known, respectively—if you *must* have it!—as the *apodyterium* [a general dressing room; *tepidarium,* being a dressing room for the warm baths]; *frigidarium;* and *sudatorium,* sweating-bath or hot-air rooms. A *caldarium* combined warm-air and warm-water bath; the *laconicum* was still hotter than the *caldarium.* There were also exercise courts, and so forth.

31. *'Αντιοχικὸς, ἢ Μισοπώγων,—The Antiochene, or the Misopogon,* i.e., *Beard-Hater;* an actual work.

32. Anthropomancy.

33. A pint.

34. St. Matthew, xiii:42, xiii:50.

35. The parentage of Daphne is ascribed elsewhere to Peneus, the river-god, or Ladon, a tributary of the Peneus, and Gæa, the Earth-Goddess; she is also said to have been delivered from her ardent pursuer by her father, Peneus.

36. Romans, xiii:1.

37. St. Matthew, xxiii:27.

38. St. Matthew, xxiii:33.

39. St. Matthew, vii:1.

40. St. Matthew, xxvi:52.

41. St. Matthew, v:39 reads: "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

42. Psalms, xcvii:2, 3 and 5.

43. Psalms, xcvii:7.

44. Lost, save for fragments preserved in the writings of St. Cyrill and Socrates Scholasticus.

45. St. Mark, xiii:2.

46. The third of the name,—Marcus Antoninus Pius. The monument was at Zaitha, some twenty miles east of Circesium.

47. The ballistæ were hurling engines; the scorpions—prototypes of the mediæval onagers—operated on the principle of a sling.

48. I am following my author; the exact title, as given before, is *Against the Christians and Against their Creed*. See Note 44.

49. All sudden mortalities were ascribed to the darts of Apollo, or Helios.

50. However, Jovian died after a reign of only seven months, his death being attributed by some to foul means.

51. So-called from her birth at Lake Tritonis.

52. The precise title is *Rerum gestarum, libri xxxi*—only the last eighteen of which, however, remain to us.

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